

Ministry of Education

Operational Review Report Conseil scolaire de district du Grand Nord de l'Ontario

June 2009

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	1
Governance and School Board Administration	1
Recommendations:	2
Human Resources Management and School Staffing/Allocation.....	3
Recommendations:	3
Financial Management	4
Recommendations:	5
School Operations and Facilities Management	6
Recommendations:	7
1. Background and Overview	9
1.1 School Board Profile and Structure.....	9
1.2 Key Priorities of the School Board	10
1.3 Student Achievement.....	11
1.4 Fiscal Overview.....	12
1.5 Key School Board Statistics	14
2. Governance and School Board Administration – Findings and Recommendations	16
Establishment of an Effective Governance Model	18
Development of the School Board’s Strategic Direction and the Annual Board Improvement Plan.....	19
Decision Making Processes.....	20
Organizational Structure and Accountability	22
Stakeholder Engagement	23
Recommendations:.....	24
3. Human Resource Management and School Staffing/Allocation – Findings and Recommendations	26
3.1 Human Resource Organization.....	26
Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities	27
Organizational Structure and Accountability	28
Monitoring and Communication of Policy	28
Recommendation:.....	29

3.2	Human Resource Management	29
	Staff Recruitment	31
	Labour Relations.....	32
	Employee Performance Evaluation Processes	33
	Attendance Management Processes/Programs.....	34
	Management of HR and Payroll Data	35
	Management of the School Board's Benefit Plans	35
	Monitoring Staff Satisfaction	36
	Recommendations:	36
3.3	School Staffing/Allocation	37
	Planning and Processes for Annual Staffing and Allocation	38
	Monitoring and Reporting on Staff Allocation.....	39
	Benchmarking Costs with Other Boards and Funding	39
	Recommendations:	39
4.	Financial Management – Findings and Recommendations.....	40
4.1	Finance Organization.....	40
	Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities	41
	Organizational Structure and Accountability	42
	Monitoring and Communication of Policy	42
	Recommendations:	43
4.2	Budget Planning and Development.....	43
	Annual Budget Development Process	44
	Enrolment Forecasting Linked to Budget Development.....	46
	Identification of Risks and Mitigation Strategies.....	47
	Recommendations:	47
4.3	Financial Reporting and Analysis.....	47
	Integrated System for Variance Analysis and Financial Reporting	48
	Interim and Annual Financial Reporting	49
	Audit.....	49
4.4	Treasury Management.....	51
	Cash and Investment Management	52
	Management of School-Based Funds.....	53
	Recommendations:	53

4.5	Non-Grant Revenue Management	54
	Policies and Procedures and Planning to Support Non Grant Revenues .	55
	Procedures for all Non-Grant Revenues	56
	Recommendations:	56
4.6	Procurement	56
	Procurement Policies and Procedures	58
	Participation in Buying Consortia	59
	Purchasing Levels of Authority	59
	Policies and Procedures for PCard/Corporate Card Use	60
	Accounting for Completeness of Purchase/Payment Cycle	61
	Use of Electronic Funds Transfer for Greater Efficiency	62
	Recommendations:	62
5.	School Operations and Facilities Management – Findings and Recommendations	63
5.1	Operations and Facilities Organization	63
	Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities	65
	Organizational Structure and Accountability	65
	Monitoring and Communication of Policy	66
	Recommendations:	66
5.2	Custodial and Maintenance Operations	67
	The Board’s Staffing Model Supports the Board’s Cleaning Standards and Maintenance Requirements	68
	Development of Annual/Multi-Year Maintenance Plan.....	69
	Training to Support Skills Development and Safety	69
	Standardization of Cleaning and Maintenance Supplies.....	70
	Project Management, Monitoring and Supporting Systems	70
	Assessment of the Board’s Service Delivery Model.....	71
	Recommendations:	71
5.3	Energy Management.....	71
	Energy Management Plan	72
	Tracking and Reporting Energy Conservation	73
	Recommendation:.....	73
5.4	Health, Safety and Security	74

	Development, Monitoring, and Tracking of Policies and Plans for Health, Safety and Security	75
	Recommendation:	76
5.5	Capital Plans, Policies and Procedures	77
	Development of Annual and Multi-Year Capital Plans	78
	On-going Monitoring and Maintenance of Data to Support Capital Planning	78
	Recommendations:	79
5.6	Construction Management	79
	Cost Effective Practices in the Design and Construction of Facilities	80
	Monitoring and Reporting on Progress of Construction Projects	80
	Maintaining Current Approved Professional Service Providers	81
	Recommendation:	81
	Appendices	82
	Appendix A: Overview of the Operational Review	82
	Operational Review Objectives	82
	Operational Review Summary Scope	82
	Operational Review Summary Approach	83
	The Operational Review Team	86
	Limitations of this Review	86
	Appendix B: Summary of Recommendations	87

Executive Summary

This report details the findings and recommendations of the Operational Review of the Conseil scolaire de district du Grand Nord de l'Ontario (CSDGNO or “the Board”) conducted by the Operational Review Team composed of external consultants from PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP and Ministry of Education staff. The Operational Review was conducted over three days beginning March 11, 2009.

Introduction

The Ministry plans to perform Operational Reviews of the 72 district school boards across the province over the next three years. The initiative supports Ministry goals and will increase confidence in public education. The Ministry’s goal is to enhance management capacity within school boards by encouraging good stewardship of public resources and by the leveraging and sharing of leading practices. By identifying opportunities for continual improvement, school board administration and operations will be aligned to support the government’s highest priority: student achievement.

The Operational Review Team reviewed the school board’s operations in four functional areas: Governance and School Board Administration; Human Resource Management and School Staffing/Allocation; Financial Management; and School Operations and Facilities Management. The purpose of this was to assess the extent to which the school board has implemented the leading practices set out in the “Operational Review Guide for Ontario School Boards”. The review also provides, where appropriate, recommendations on opportunities for improvement. Appendix A provides an overview summary of the Operational Review scope and methodology.

The review found that the Conseil scolaire de district du Grand Nord de l'Ontario is well managed. Noted strengths of the Board include a relationship of trust and respect between the administration and trustees, a clearly articulated mandate outlined in a multi-year strategic plan, and the implementation of innovative initiatives for reducing energy consumption. The organization of the Board’s senior administration appears to be well founded and operating effectively. Members of the senior administration team sit on the executive committee. They monitor student enrolment, staffing levels and implement effective fiscal policy.

A summary of the findings and recommendations identified in each of the functional areas reviewed follows. Details can be found in subsequent sections of the report.

Governance and School Board Administration

The Conseil scolaire de district du Grand Nord de l'Ontario (CSDGNO) is characterized by a relationship of trust and respect between the administration and trustees. The governance structure includes a board of 12 trustees of whom eight have been on the

board for two years on average. In addition, two student trustees are elected to sit on the board of trustees.

The organization of the Board's senior administration appears to be well founded and operating effectively. The executive committee, which has members of the senior administration team, is composed of the Director of Education, two superintendents of education, three student services managers, the Superintendent of Business, a public relations officer and the HR manager. The committee's duties and responsibilities are in the process of being documented.

The Board's decision-making process is clearly described and documented. The procedural rules that specify the Board's meeting organization and decision-making processes are documented and communicated to all trustees.

The Board's strategic direction was revised in 2007 with the introduction of its multi-year strategic plan entitled "accountability framework" for 2007-2010. The accountability framework, which was developed by the administration and validated by the board of trustees, identifies four main priorities: 1. Improving student achievement, 2. French proficiency, 3. safety and character development, and 4. organizational vitality.

The board's multi-year strategic direction is supported by several annual improvement plans, namely the Director of Education's plan, the Board's operational plans for its departments and services, the Board's annual strategy to improve literacy and numeracy, as well as the school improvement plans. The Director of Education submits the school board's results with respect to its annual improvement plan in her annual report to the board of trustees.

The Board's guidelines can be accessed online on its website.

Recommendations:

- The school board should clearly define and document the division of duties and responsibilities between the trustees and the Director of Education in order to foster effective working relationships.
- In the Board's annual improvement plan, management should define specific, measurable, timely, achievable and relevant objectives for both academic and nonacademic services that demonstrate alignment with the school board's multi-year strategic plan. Management should consider submitting periodic progress reports with respect to the Board's annual improvement plan to the board of trustees.
- The school board should implement a periodic review cycle for guidelines to ensure they remain effective.

Human Resources Management and School Staffing/Allocation

The human resources department has demonstrated a good level of operational effectiveness. This department has implemented several leading practices, including the following:

- The HR department regularly communicates with stakeholders about existing HR guidelines and measures through meetings with union representatives, presentations intended for principals and vice-principals during management councils, as well as several comprehensive personnel information kits, such as the new employee kit, the hiring kit and the work injury kit.
- The HR department developed recruiting and hiring guidelines that describe the selection process and define the Board's recruiting priorities.
- The HR department communicates openly and positively with the unions in many ways, including regular contact between the HR manager and union representatives, and the use of a proactive approach to dealing with problems within the school board.
- To improve the effectiveness of its services, the HR department is currently implementing a new computerized management tool called 'Smart Find', a software program that reports absences and disabilities automatically.

Recommendations:

- The HR department's annual plan should be completed to include department priorities and measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities. This plan would inform senior administration of activity details and would facilitate the annual communication of accomplishments. Once the HR department's annual improvement plan is created, the school board should then consider submitting it to the executive committee or the HR committee at the same time as the periodic progress reports.
- The HR department should complete its employee evaluation guidelines to include a policy on performance appraisals for non-unionized support staff to ensure uniformity and transparency in the evaluation process of school board employees.
- The HR department should develop a formal attendance management program that includes the implementation of policies and procedures to reduce absences, methods for monitoring the rate of absences in different employee groups of the school board, and the production of periodic attendance reports to inform the

executive committee and trustees of the efficiency of attendance management programs and methods.

- The school board should continue its efforts to maintain the pay equity plan for all employee groups to ensure that the school board's pay equity program is up-to-date for all school board employees.
- The school board should conduct periodic reviews of the insurance carrier (Administrative Services only) that manages medical and dental claims, in order to ensure that the school board's claims are processed according to the plan's terms and conditions.
- The HR department should establish policies and terms related to support staff development. The department could start by conducting a survey to identify employees' training needs. Once a training plan is established, the HR department should implement measures to monitor employee participation, the training budget and results.
- The HR department should continue its efforts to introduce exit interviews for employees who are leaving their positions.
- The school board should formally document the annual staff allocation process to clarify the duties and responsibilities of all staff, thereby increasing the transparency of the process for the trustees.
- The HR department should consider comparing its staff allocation costs with those of other school boards with a similar funding model in order to ensure an efficient use of resources.

Financial Management

The school board has achieved positive results with respect to financial management due to the implementation of several leading practices, including the following:

- The annual budget development process has been clearly documented and communicated to key stakeholders.
- The school board has adopted an integrated financial system, which combines general ledger, accounts payable, accounts receivable, budget, purchasing, and recently, capital management modules.
- The school board participates in several purchasing consortia, including those for school transportation, natural gas, paper, and custodial and maintenance supplies.

- The school board has guidelines governing the purchasing of school board goods and services.
- The school board has consolidated banking activities with a single institution to minimize its bank charges and maximize the interest rate on its surplus funds.

Recommendations:

- Management's annual improvement plan should be completed to include measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities for the finance department. The annual business improvement plan should demonstrate an explicit relationship between the finance department's activities and results and the Board's priorities and targeted results, as defined in the accountability framework. Management should also submit its annual business improvement plan to the executive committee or the business and facilities committee at the same time as the periodic progress reports.
- The finance department should continue its efforts to implement measures to ensure its administrative guidelines and financial directives are followed.
- Management should ensure that the annual budget presented for approval is clearly linked to Board-approved goals and priorities, including student achievement targets.
- The school board should consider documenting the risks linked to the budget and formally sharing them with members of the executive and finance committees and trustees who are unable to attend meetings, so that they are also aware of the potential risks, the status of risks and proposed mitigation strategies.
- Management should consider modifying the format of interim reports, based on the format suggested in section 4.3 of this report.
- The school board should consider formalizing an internal audit function. This would include a broader audit of financial and management controls. The finance department could start by identifying options for the mandate and scope of this function and the estimated cost for each option.
- The school board should consider establishing an audit committee to oversee the audit process. The committee's mandate could be to review the audited annual financial statements, the annual appointment of an external auditor, the annual audit plan, the recommendation letter and other matters related to the annual audit of the financial statements, the treasurer's quarterly report, and other Board matters.

- Management and the board of trustees should consider including external advisors to contribute to the effectiveness of the audit committee or that of the finance committee if its mandate is widened.
- The Board should develop an investment policy to reduce idle cash, in accordance with the *Education Act*.
- The finance department should develop periodic reports on the Board's cash position and the results of future investment activities, and share them with the executive committee and the board of trustees.
- The finance department should consider using electronic registration and payment systems for its non-grant revenues exceeding a minimum amount to be determined. For example, management could consider an electronic registration and payment system for its continuing education programs.
- The finance department should define purchasing levels of authority that are commensurate with job title/role in its purchasing policy. Once the purchasing levels of authority are established, the department should ensure that they are communicated to staff and develop a monitoring process for this policy.
- The finance department should ensure that three-way matching (purchase order, receipt/invoice and inspection) is used for Board purchases, where appropriate. The finance department should continue to increase its use of electronic funds transfer (EFT) payments to all appropriate suppliers, to gain greater efficiency and minimize the risk of payments being altered prior to clearing the bank.

School Operations and Facilities Management

The maintenance and facilities departments in charge of school operations and facilities management have adopted many leading practices in their activities, such as the following:

- The school board has an annual training program for its custodial and maintenance staff that supports skills development and promotes health and safety.
- The custodial and maintenance department has developed a custodial allocation model for the optimum use of resources in custodial activities.
- Written cleaning standards were set by the school board and are used by school principals to appraise custodial staff, and by the maintenance manager to handle potential complaints from facility users or custodians.

- The school board has developed a multi-year maintenance plan that addresses its preventative, critical and deferred maintenance, in accordance with the Board's standards. The Board's maintenance and renewal activities are re-assessed annually through individual school assessments.
- The school board has taken various energy management measures in its schools, including hiring an external consultant to conduct an energy audit of all its facilities. On the basis of the consultant's recommendations to reduce energy consumption for each facility as well as the Ministry of Education's funding for energy-efficient schools, the Board has developed a two-year action plan that details various projects to install, replace or repair devices intended to reduce energy consumption.
- The Board has an approved pupil accommodation review policy.
- The school board has a multi-year capital plan and a capital liquidity template that were approved by the Ministry.

Recommendations:

- Management's annual business improvement plan should be completed to include measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities for the maintenance and facilities departments. The annual business improvement plan should demonstrate an explicit relationship between the planned activities and goals for the maintenance and facilities departments and the Board's priorities and targeted goals, as defined in the accountability framework. The school board should also submit its annual business improvement plan to the executive committee or the business and facilities committee at the same time as the periodic progress reports.
- Management should set up measures to ensure school operation and facilities management guidelines are followed. These processes should include periodic communication of the guidelines to the appropriate staff, as well as occasional assessments of staff compliance with the guidelines.
- The maintenance department should proceed with its plan to implement an inventory system that will enable it to track and control major cleaning and maintenance equipment.
- The school board should also regularly compare the organization of its maintenance and custodial activities with that of similar or contiguous school boards.

- The Board should ask the utility companies to provide consolidated billing in an electronic format. This would support more efficient monitoring and forecasting of energy consumption by eliminating the need to manually consolidate billing. Given the geographic area covered by the school board, the Board will likely not be able to consolidate utility billing across all sites. However, management is encouraged to explore opportunities to consolidate utility billing in urban centres such as Sudbury, to increase energy efficiency.
- The school board should continue its efforts to introduce different alarm codes corresponding to emergency situations and danger levels along with a description of the responsibilities of each department in its safety guidelines and procedures.
- The school board should consider establishing an approved list of professional service providers subject to periodic review where appropriate (e.g., professional services for the Sudbury region).

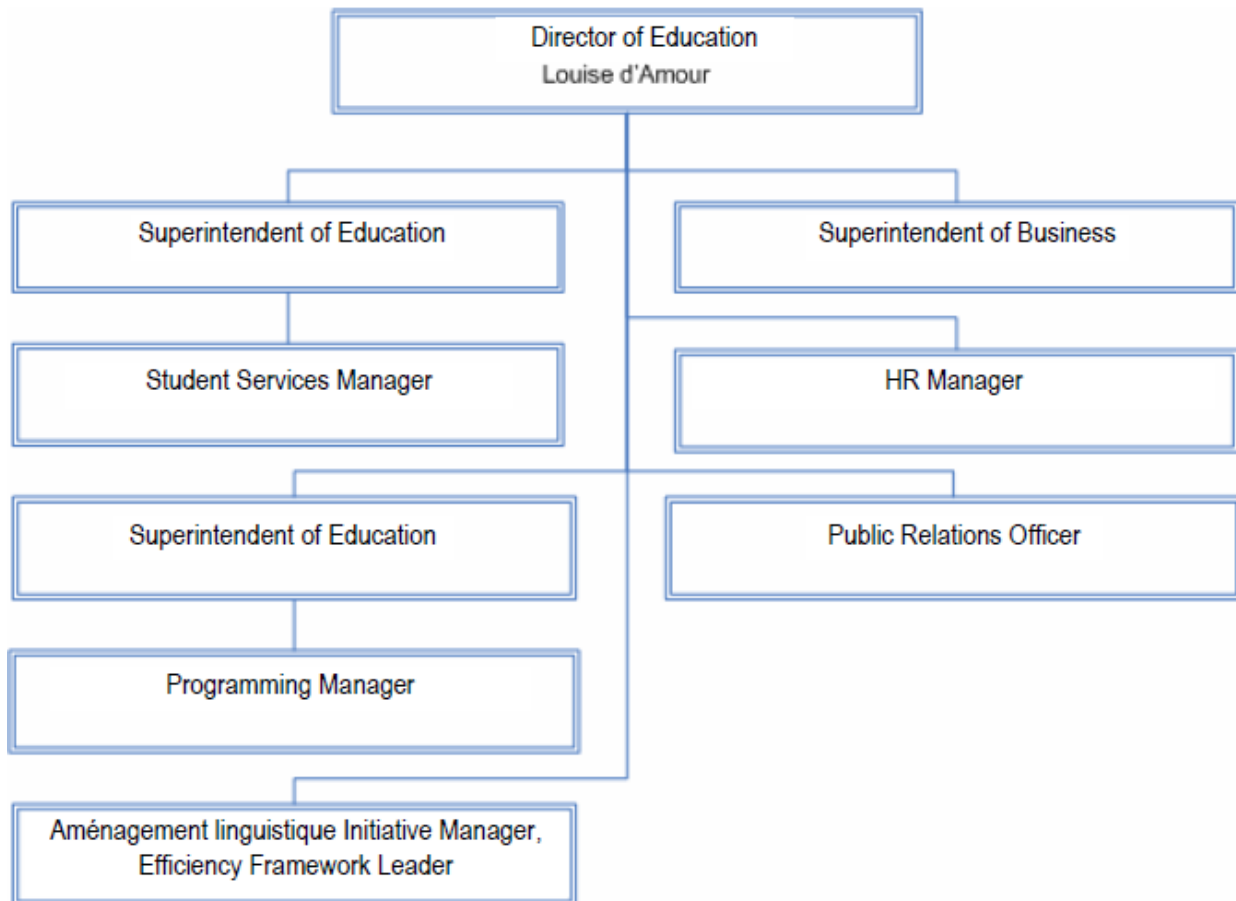
1. Background and Overview

1.1 School Board Profile and Structure

The Conseil scolaire de district du Grand Nord de l'Ontario (CSDGNO) is responsible for French-language public education in schools located in communities such as Dubreuilville,

Elliot Lake, Longlac, Manitouwadge, Marathon, Markstay, Noëlville, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Wawa. The Board provides elementary and secondary education for more than 2100 students located in 14 elementary schools and 9 secondary schools. According to the Board's data, the CSDGNO's schools cover an area of over 65,000 square kilometres.

The following table presents the school board's executive committee.



1.2 Key Priorities of the School Board

The mission and vision of the Conseil scolaire de district du Grand Nord de l'Ontario is presented on the school board's website.

Its mission is defined as follows:

“The Conseil scolaire public du Grand Nord de l'Ontario, together with its communities, provides a French-language education of the utmost quality in order to develop each student's skills, enabling him or her to reach his or her full potential and to find his or her place as an active and productive citizen of the world.”

It has the following vision:

To be a school board of choice recognized for:

- *the superior quality of its French-language education*
- *its program excellence*
- *its openness to the world*
- *innovation*
- *fostering self-respect and the respect of others.*

In its 2007-2010 multi-year strategic plan, also known as “accountability framework”, the school board identified four main priorities:

1. *Improving student achievement*

- 75% of junior division students achieve provincial test standards in writing, reading and math.
- 80% of Grade 10 students pass the OSSLT (Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test) on their first attempt.
- 40% of Grade 9 students achieve standards in applied math.
- 75% of Grade 9 students achieve standards in math.

2. *Proficiency in French* ○ *75% of students achieve intermediate levels by the 2nd year of the ACTFL continuum.*

- The Board and its schools contribute to promoting the French language within their communities through relevant activities.

3. *Safety and character development*

- The Board and its schools have commendable safe environments.
- Leading practices in character development are implemented in CSDGNO schools.

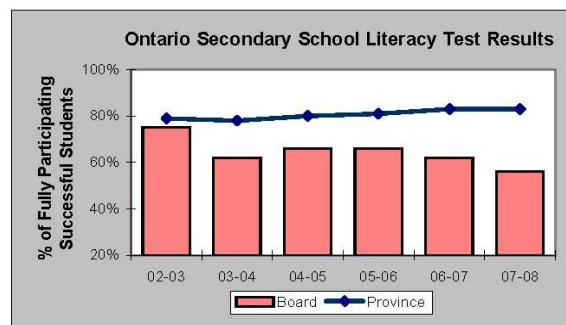
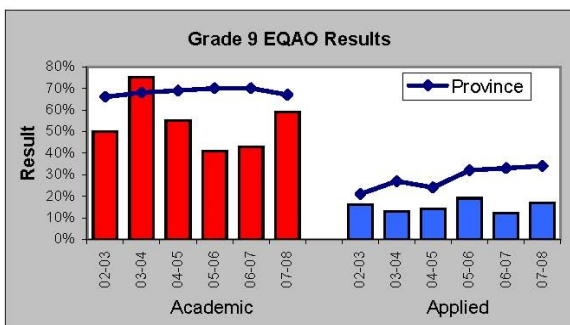
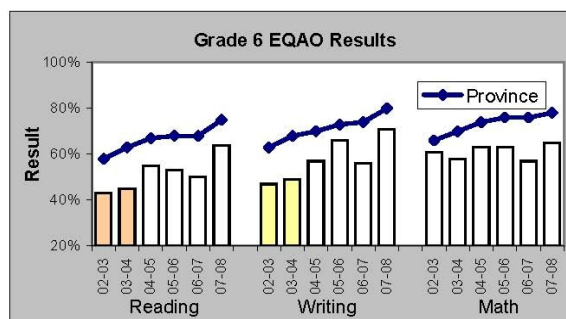
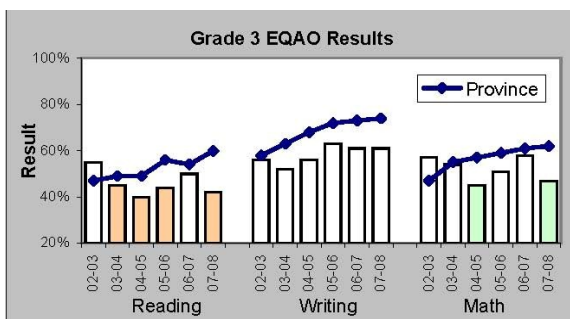
4. *Organizational vitality*

- The CSDGNO is exemplary in its service approach.
- The CSDGNO is a model of continuous improvement.
- The CPDGNO is a model in terms of environmental protection and energy conservation practices.

The school board has set general indicators for each priority, as well as short-term, medium-term and strategic goals to be achieved, respectively, by the end of August 2008, the end of August 2009 and the end of August 2010.

1.3 Student Achievement

The following charts illustrate the Board's EQAO and OSSLT results over the last five years.



1.4 Fiscal Overview

Overall, the Board follows conservative fiscal policies to achieve a balanced budget.

Summary Financial Data (Revenues)

Revenues	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Financial Statements	2008-09 Revised Estimates
Legislative Grants	\$37,110,684	\$38,606,353	\$40,940,733
Local taxation	\$3,601,974	\$3,704,014	\$3,689,093
Board Revenues	\$1,089,273	\$948,975	\$659,617
Other Operating & capital Grants	\$2,220,733	\$2,179,926	\$1,260,436
Total Revenues	\$44,022,664	\$45,439,268	\$46,549,879

Summary Financial Data (Expenditure)

Expenditures:	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Financial Statements	2008-09 Revised Estimates
Operating expenditures	\$37,760,951	\$39,542,099	\$42,565,430
Capital expenditures – Before transfers to/from reserves	\$5,268,063	\$5,553,100	\$3,984,448
Transfer to (from) Reserves	\$993,651	\$377,965	\$0

Expenditures:	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Financial Statements	2008-09 Revised Estimates
Total Expenditures	\$44,022,665	\$45,473,164	\$46,549,878
In-year Surplus (Deficit)	\$0	\$-33,896	\$0

School Board Reserves and Deferred Revenues

School Board Reserve and Deferred Revenues:	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Financial Statements	2008-09 Revised Estimates
Retirement Gratuities	\$207,825	\$214,060	\$214,060
Reserves for Working Funds	\$2,858,788	\$3,423,068	\$3,423,068
School Activities	\$0	\$0	\$0
WSIB	\$0	\$0	\$0
Miscellaneous			
Prof. dev. Longlac	\$11,230	\$11,230	\$11,230
Stabilization funds	\$291,208	\$104,893	\$104,893
Classroom funds	\$607,781	\$607,781	\$607,781
Pupil Accommodation Debt Reserve	\$0	\$0	\$0
GPL Reserve	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Reserve Funds	\$3,976,832	\$4,361,032	\$4,361,032
Reserve for classroom funds	\$1,587,009	\$1,602,510	\$873,473
Special Education Reserve	\$45,647	\$51,122	\$69,854
Distant School Reserves	\$0	\$0	\$0
Pupil Accommodation	\$0	\$0	\$0
Program Improvement Reserve	\$15,501	\$0	\$0
Improvement of Access to Special Education	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other deferred operating revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0
Proceeds of Disposal Reserve – School Buildings	\$0	\$0	\$0
Proceeds of Disposal Reserve - Other	\$0	\$0	\$0
MECR/BEER Reserve	\$0	\$0	\$0
Reserve for education development charges	\$0	\$0	\$0

School Board Reserve and Deferred Revenues:	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Financial Statements	2008-09 Revised Estimates
Other deferred capital revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Deferred Revenues	\$1,648,157	\$1,653,632	\$943,327
Total Board Reserves and Deferred Revenues	\$5,624,989	\$6,014,664	\$5,304,359

1.5 Key School Board Statistics

The following table highlights key statistics for the Board.

Day School Enrolment

Day School Enrolment	2002-03 Actual	2008-09 Revised Estimates
Elementary Day School ADE	1,418	1,368
Secondary Day School ADE	884	771
Total Day School Enrolment	2,301	2,139

Primary Class Size

Primary Class Size	2003-04	2007-08
% of Classes Less Than 20	60%	94%
% of Classes Less Than 23	82%	100%
Average Class Size - Jr/Inter	21.29	18.9
% of 3/4 Classes 23 & Under	100%	100%
% of Combined Classes	15%	27%

Staffing

Staffing	2003-04	2007-08
School Based Teachers	193	229
Teacher Assistants	59	54
Other Student Support	35	60
School Administration	13	19
School Clerical	22	21
School Operations	32	44

Staffing	2003-04	2007-08
Other Non-Classroom	26	36
Total Staffing	379	462
Teacher - Pupil Ratio	1:12	1:09
FTE Staff per 1,000 Pupils (ADE)¹	164.6	215.9
Total Salary & Benefits as % of Net Operating Expenditures	82.7%	82.3%

Special Education

Special Education	2003-04	2007-08
Special Education Incremental Expenditures	\$4,374,346	\$6,214,199
Special Education Allocation	\$4,266,858	\$6,214,199
Spending above Allocation (Reserve)	\$107,488	\$0

School Utilization

School Utilization	2003-04	2007-08
Number of schools	18	24
Total Enrolment (ADE)	2,301	2,139
School Capacity (Spaces)	4,933	6,049
% of surplus capacity (insufficient capacity)	46.7%	35.4%
Board area (km²)	59,612	59,612
Number of Trustees	12	12

¹ Note: Impacted by Class Size and Special Education

2. Governance and School Board Administration – Findings and Recommendations

The school board’s governance model and administrative organizational framework make a significant contribution in helping the board of trustees, Director of Education, senior administration and community stakeholders support both “Student Achievement” strategies and effective school board operations.

Governance and board administration processes are reviewed to:

- Understand how the governance model delineates the division of duties between the board of trustees and the administration and supports operational effectiveness;
- Assess the development of the annual plan (including the goals/priorities) and actions to engage and communicate with key stakeholders and the related reporting against the plan;
- Assess how policies and related procedures are generated and maintained;
- Assess whether staffing levels and organization structures provide for clarity of roles and accountability sufficient to carry out the school board’s objectives;
- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

This section provides a summary of the findings and recommendations of our assessment of the Board’s adoption of the leading practices relating to the governance and board administration. Our findings are a result of our review of the data provided by the Board and our field work, which included interviews with the Chair, the Director and senior staff of the Board.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for governance and board administration, and identifies where evidence showed that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a “No” indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Establishment of an Effective Governance Model

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
The school board's governance model clearly delineates the division of duties between the board of trustees and the director of education. The board has established clearly defined duties and responsibilities to support on effective working relationship.	No

Development of the School Board's Strategic Direction and the Annual Board Improvement Plan

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
The board of trustees develops and communicates a multi-year strategic plan that provides a framework for annual planning.	Yes
The director of education and senior management develop an annual board improvement plan of their goals/priorities, incorporating both academic and non-academic departments. The plan is aligned with the board's multi-year strategic plan and has goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely.	No
Senior management periodically/annually report to the board on the status and outcomes of the annual board improvement plan.	Yes

Decision Making Processes

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
The board of trustees and management have established appropriate processes for decision making to address student achievement targets and operational performance.	Yes
The board of trustees and management have appropriate processes for the establishment and regular maintenance of policies for the efficient and effective operation of the board. Policies are posted on the board's web site.	No

Organizational Structure and Accountability

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
The organizational structure has clearly defined organizational units that delineate roles and responsibilities, minimize administrative costs and ensure effective and efficient operation.	Yes
The director has established a formal succession plan to manage retirements and resignations of key managers/administrators.	Yes
A departmental organization chart (supplemented with a Directory of key staff contact information) is publicly available on the board's web site.	Yes

Stakeholder Engagement

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
The board of trustees and management proactively engage internal and external stakeholders on a regular basis and through a variety of communication vehicles (e.g., websites, email, memos, town halls, etc.).	Yes
Key senior staffs from all functional areas are members and participants in sector committees of provincial associations and Ministry workgroups.	Yes

Establishment of an Effective Governance Model

The Conseil scolaire public du Grand Nord is characterized by a relationship of trust and collaboration between the administration and trustees. The governance structure includes a board of 12 trustees of whom eight have been on the board for two years on average. In addition, two student trustees are elected to sit on the board of trustees. The executive committee, which has members of the senior administration team, is composed of the Director of Education, both superintendents of education, the three managers of student services, academic programs and language planning departments, the Superintendent of Business, the public relations officer and the HR manager.

To ensure successful meetings, the Board has based its code of procedures² on *Robert's Rules of Order*³, which are namely applied in proceedings at the Parliament of Canada.

The duties of the board of trustees and the Director of Education are currently not documented in governance policies or guidelines. The school board uses the

² The code of procedure is described below in the "decision-making process" section.

³ A manual by Henry Martyn Robert

description of trustee duties stated in the orientation manual that is published by Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) and distributed to new trustees. In order to establish a succession plan for the Director of Education whose retirement is expected for October 2010, the Director of Education is presently developing a formalized description of her duties and responsibilities.

In practice, the role of school trustees is to determine the school board's main directions. The role of the Director of Education includes the development, implementation and evaluation of files and policies. As the sole employee on the board of trustees, the Director of Education serves as a key contact person for the trustees.

Development of the School Board's Strategic Direction and the Annual Board Improvement Plan

The Board's current strategic direction was developed in 2007 with the introduction of the "accountability framework" for 2007-2010. The school board's accountability framework, an initiative developed by the administration and validated by the board of trustees, identifies four main priorities.

1. Improving student achievement
2. French proficiency
3. Character development and safety
4. Organizational vitality

Since 2007, trustees meet annually to review the Board's priorities. Last year, the Board added a fifth priority to its accountability framework based on the board of trustees' recommendations:

5. Environmental education.

The Board's current priorities were identified primarily by surveys conducted by an external consultant. Parents, students, teaching and support staff, headquarter staff, and other stakeholders supporting students participated in the survey in 2005. Through the analysis of the survey results, the Board was able to restate its mission, vision and values, as well as define priorities such as student safety and French-language proficiency based on the way the Board and various stakeholders perceive the environment.

Based on the environment study, the accountability framework was developed from September 2007 to the spring of 2008. The Director of Education consulted the board of trustees, classroom consultants, some principals and members of the executive

committee to set outcomes to be achieved by 2010, medium-term goals for 2008 and 2009, and general indicators for each priority. The accountability framework was validated by the trustees in April 2008. The Board is supported by several annual improvement plans, including the Director of Education's plan, the Board's operational plans for its departments and services, the Board's annual literacy and numeracy improvement plan, and school improvement plans.

The Director of Education, together with both superintendents of education and the manager of language planning and the efficiency framework, developed the annual literacy and numeracy improvement plan for student achievement. School improvement plans are developed by principals in collaboration with the superintendents of education and the Board's different departments. The Board-level and school-level improvements plans contain measurable targets for higher EQAO test results. Teachers are encouraged to develop their own annual improvement plans, called "intervention plans", based on the previous year's EQAO results. Thus, the school board takes a top-down and bottom-up approach for annual student achievement plans.

For non-academic services, the Board prepares annual improvement plans called "operational plans" for the human resources department as well as for the business department, which includes finance and facilities. The operational plans for the HR and business departments outline the activities scheduled for the year, required resources, persons in charge of the different files, key stakeholders and deadlines for the concerned non-academic services; however, these plans do not define measurable targets.

Except for the first two priorities in the accountability framework, the Board has not set measurable targets for the three other priorities, namely: 3. safety and character development, 4. organizational vitality, and 5. environmental education. The school board could start by refining its accountability framework and related annual improvement plans by identifying measurable targets for each strategic goal associated with the Board's five priorities.

The Director of Education writes an annual report to inform the board of trustees and the community of the school board's results. As a next step, the school board could consider presenting the results in the report according to the Board's five main priorities.

Decision Making Processes

The Board's decision-making process is clearly outlined and documented. A documented code of procedures that was distributed to all trustees describes the decision-making and organizational processes for board meetings. The code of procedures indicates the agenda's minimal or standard content and scheduled Board

meetings. It sets the necessary quorum for scheduled, unscheduled and special meetings as well as the procedures for modifying the agenda.

The board of trustees schedules meetings every month during the school year. Given the school board's large area of operation and the distance separating the trustees, most meetings are conducted by videoconference. At least three face-to-face meetings are organized annually to overcome remoteness and build relationships between board members.

Six standing committees created by the board of trustees assist in the decision-making process, when needed. At least three trustees are selected annually to sit on each committee. Trustees who are non-members of the committees are invited to attend the meetings voluntarily. The board's standing committees include the business and facilities committee, human resources committee, guidelines committee, the special education committee, the academic programs committee, and the parent engagement committee. Among the ad hoc committees are the committee for the assessment of the Director of Education, and the liaison committee for construction projects. The list of the board's committees and their members are publicly accessible on the school board's website.

Among the board of trustees' committees, the business and facilities committee is responsible for ensuring that administrative services are managed in compliance with the board's policies. The Director of Education, the Superintendent of Business and six trustees make up the members of the business and facilities committee. The committee helps the board of trustees to make decisions on operational management matters and meets at least four times a year: once in September, November and January, and several times in May. Management first presents budget plans, the Board's budget review, construction and renovation projects, and all new guideline proposals for operational management to the business and facilities committee. These items are subsequently presented to the board of trustees during its monthly scheduled meetings.

The items discussed by the business and facilities committee are previously defined and discussed by the executive committee of the school board. The executive committee is comprised of the Director of Education, both superintendents of education, the three managers of the student services, academic programs and language planning departments, the Superintendent of Business, the public relations officer and the HR manager.

The executive committee meets weekly to review ongoing files, ensure their follow-up, and advise the Director of Education. A week prior to the scheduled meetings of the board of trustees and the business and facilities committee, the Director of Education submits the draft agenda to the Chair of the board of trustees for validation. Any items requiring a discussion or decision are added to the agenda depending on the

progression of the items at hand. Once validated by the Chair of the board, the agenda is sent to the trustees and senior management. Agendas for scheduled meetings are sent to principal, staff members, school council chairs, and union and media representatives. During a meeting, the agenda may be modified by vote from two thirds of attending board members.

The Board has around 60 guidelines that are publicly accessible via its website. The Director of Education, superintendents and department managers are responsible for developing, implementing and maintaining the guidelines in their respective fields. There is no established, documented and systematic review cycle for guidelines. In general, existing guidelines are reviewed or new guidelines or directives are developed in response to new Ministry or legislative requirements. A committee is in charge of reviewing guidelines; it is composed of four trustees and the Director of Education, and it meets in order to recommend changes to the board of trustees.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

The organization of the Board's senior administration appears to be well founded and operating effectively. An executive committee was implemented in 2003. On the Director of Education's initiative, an additional superintendent of education, a manager of academic programs and a manager of language planning were added to the governance structure. The duties of both superintendents of education are clearly defined, documented and annually communicated to the schools. Each superintendent of education is assigned a portfolio of responsibilities, including special education, academic programs, language planning, student health and safety, etc., as well as a group of about 10 elementary and secondary schools. The schools were assigned to the superintendents according to the number of students and geographic location of the schools.

The superintendents of education are supported by three school board academic departments: 1. student services, comprising of classroom consultants, communication assistants, a speech therapist, social workers, a student attendance officer, a teacher of deaf children, and a psychometrician; 2. the academic programs department, which includes classroom consultants and the librarian; 3. the language planning department, comprised of classroom consultants, a community development officer, cultural counsellors, and a language intervention assistant. The superintendents of education, the managers of the academic departments and school principals and vice-principals meet once a month to share information and viewpoints on teaching matters.

In order to promote communication between schools and the proper functioning of schools, the board's management also organizes management councils. The management councils, which include all members of the executive committee and the school principals and vice-principals, meet four to six times a year. The goal of these

meetings is to inform school principals and vice-principals of new initiatives taken by the Ministry of Education and other organizations, as well as provide training sessions onsite or through local, regional or provincial organizations.

The distribution of duties between non-academic departments is clearly defined and documented in detailed organizational charts for the HR and business departments. In addition to the superintendents of education, academic departments, HR and business departments, the public relations officer and administrative assistant also report to the Director of Education.

In view of the current Director of Education's retirement in October 2010, the Director is developing a formal description of her duties and responsibilities as well as a succession plan detailing several options for the board of trustees to select new candidates for her position. The report will be presented to the board of trustees in September 2009.

The Board has not prepared a formal succession plan to manage the retirements and resignations of school principals, vice-principals and other administrators. In practice, the Board identifies candidates through an informal process described in a comprehensive and detailed manual entitled "Guide de la planification de la relève des cadres des conseils scolaires publics" by the Centre franco-ontarien de ressources pédagogiques. Every year, principals are invited to indicate which schools they wish to be assigned to. They are also encouraged to refer qualified candidates for principal and vice-principal positions. The Director of Education has identified staff members who could act as temporary replacements for school board administrators.

As a next step, the school board could reconsider the relevance of posting the contact information of all staff members and review its website so that it includes the mandate and description of each department or service, a detailed organizational chart indicating the different superintendents and administrative departments, as well as a directory of key staff contact information.

Stakeholder Engagement

The board of trustees and management proactively engage internal and external stakeholders on a regular basis. Through a variety of communication vehicles (website postings, emails, memos, press releases, school calendars, bookmarks, flyers, etc.) are used to ensure the participation of key stakeholders throughout the year. The Board uses its website to share with external stakeholders the Director of Education's report, the Board's financial statements, and the Board's monthly newsletter, "Le dernier mot au CSPGNO".

To develop and implement the promotional strategies of the board of trustees and schools, the Board set up a promotional committee composed of executive committee members and three school principals.

In 2000, the school board developed its first marketing and communications plan. Revised annually by the promotional committee, the plan contains the description of various activities for promotion, internal and external communication, partnerships and/or sponsorships.

In 2005, the school board hired a subcontractor to develop and conduct a series of surveys with more than 2,000 stakeholders including parents, students, teaching and support staff, headquarter staff, and principals and vice-principals. By analyzing the survey results, the Board was able to restate its mission, vision and values, as well as define priorities within the framework of its multi-year strategic plan. In 2010, the Board intends to renew the stakeholder survey process to review and update the school board's environmental analysis.

Key Board administration members are actively involved in various national and provincial forums, including the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones (FNCSF), the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE), the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA), and the Conseil ontarien des directions de l'éducation en langue française (CODELF) on which the Director of Education chaired twice and is currently the Vice-Chair. The Superintendent of Business sits on the Council of Senior Business Officials Committee (COSBO). The superintendents of education sit on the Regroupement des surintendances en éducation (RSE). One of the superintendents is the vice president of the Association des gestionnaires de l'éducation franco-ontarienne (AGÉFO). The Director of Education and the superintendents of education sit on several other regional and provincial committees, namely the Curriculum Council and the Tripartite Teacher Advisory Committee.

This ensures that the Board learns about best practices and shares them throughout the region.

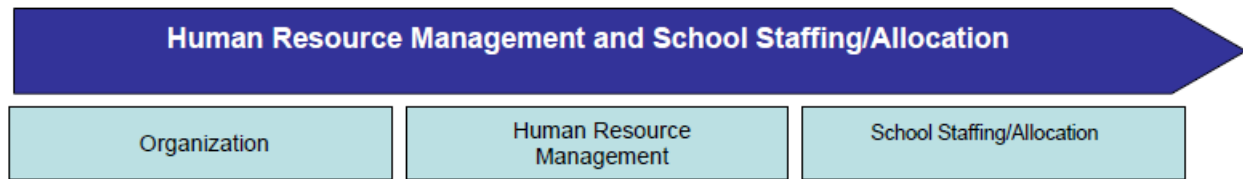
Recommendations:

- The school board should clearly define and document the division of duties and responsibilities between the trustees and the Director of Education in order to foster effective working relationships.
- In the Board's annual improvement plan, management should define specific, measurable, timely, achievable and relevant goals for both academic and nonacademic services that demonstrate alignment with the school board's multi-year strategic plan. Management should consider submitting periodic progress

reports with respect to the Board's annual improvement plan to the board of trustees.

- The school board should implement a periodic review cycle for guidelines to ensure they remain effective.

3. Human Resource Management and School Staffing/Allocation – Findings and Recommendations



Effective management of human resources ensures an adequate number of qualified staff throughout the organization can perform their prescribed duties. Policies and procedures to develop staff are in place, through performance appraisals, professional development and support services. Staff allocations to schools and classrooms meet the Ministry's class size requirements, and are congruent with the school board's collective agreements and allocation models. The allocation models adopted by the school board ensure the most effective teaching and learning practices.

The following is a summary of our assessment of the school board's adoption of the leading practices under the processes identified above. All findings are a result of a review of the data provided by the school board and on-site field-work, which included interviews with all key HR staff, as well as follow-up and confirmation of information.

3.1 Human Resource Organization

The review of the organization of the HR department assesses:

- Whether appropriate policies and procedures have been established and maintained to support the HR functions and required priorities, and whether they are aligned with the school board's directions;
- Whether an annual plan setting out the goals and priorities and their alignment to the school board's strategic directions has been established;
- Whether the roles and responsibilities of staff support the key functions, activities and practices of HR;
- Opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for HR organizations, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full.

Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a “No” indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

Leading Practices – Human Resource Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
The HR department’s goals and priorities are documented in an annual department plan. They are aligned to the annual board improvement plan, accessible by key stakeholders. The plan incorporates measurable targets, specific timelines, and identified responsibilities.	No

Organizational Structure and Accountability

Leading Practices – Human Resource Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
The HR department has clearly defined organizational units and delineates the respective roles and responsibilities. A current organization chart is available.	Yes
Senior HR staff has appropriate designations (e.g., Certified Human Resource Professional, etc.).	Yes

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

Leading Practices – Human Resource Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
HR Management has processes in place to monitor HR policy compliance.	Yes
HR Management provides regularly scheduled HR policy awareness, training, and education sessions.	Yes

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

The HR department works to maintain excellent relationships with all employee groups in order to support teaching and learning. The mandate of the department is not presented on the school board’s website. In practice, the mission of the HR department is to serve the Board by maintaining healthy and efficient work relationships with its employees

For the 2008/2009 academic year, the HR manager developed an annual improvement plan, called an operational plan, which identifies the required resources, deadlines and expected outcomes for each of the department’s scheduled activities and interventions. These include implementing collective agreements, developing employment and

interview kits, and submitting union meeting reports. The annual improvement plan identifies specific activities that support the Board's strategic goals such as improving student achievement, French proficiency and student safety.

The HR manager usually defines the department's priorities in the departmental plan. The plan for the 2008/2009 academic year was not prepared since the manager was working primarily on collective agreement negotiations and the accountability framework.

The HR department's annual improvement plan is supported by each of its members' individual operational plans, which identify the activities they will focus on in the upcoming year as well as the indicators, required resources and deadlines related to those activities.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

The HR manager reports to the Director of Education and is a member of the executive committee. In managing the school board's human resources, the HR manager is supported by an administrative assistant, an HR department officer, an HR department assistant, and a part-time HR support clerk. The HR department officer is responsible for keeping employee files up-to-date and managing social benefits. The HR department assistant is in charge of attendance monitoring, return to work plans, and files relating to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). The HR support clerk is in charge of following up on employee performance appraisals with the Board's senior management and supervisors. The HR manager is directly involved in labour relations, collective bargaining, recruitment, and coordinating the allocation of teachers with the business department.

The roles and responsibilities of each HR staff member are clearly defined. There is a detailed, up-to-date organizational chart of the HR department; however, it not publicly accessible via the school board's website.

The HR manager has professional HR qualifications and relevant experience in the field. During the 2006/2007 academic year, she became a certified human resources professional (CHRP).

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

HR guidelines are published on the school board's website. The Board has developed guidelines to evaluate various employee groups, the staff recruiting and hiring process, disciplinary actions, criminal background checks, nepotism, harassment, language of communication in schools, etc. The guidelines are not subjected to a documented, systematic, review cycle; however, a review of the material demonstrates that the department is focused on maintaining and updating them so that they remain in effect.

As a next step, the school board should consider establishing a regular review cycle of HR guidelines, to ensure they are regularly updated and communicated.

The HR department regularly informs stakeholders of existing guidelines and HR measures during meetings with union representatives, as well as during meetings and presentations with school principals and vice-principals as part of the management councils that are held four to six times a year. The department also developed comprehensive information kits to inform employees of different guidelines, procedures, administrative directives and related paperwork, such as kits for new employee orientation, recruitment and work injuries.

This level of communication facilitates guideline training and creates a broad awareness and understanding of the Board's HR guidelines and procedures.

Recommendation:

- The HR department's annual plan should be completed to include department priorities and measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities. This plan would inform senior administration of activity details and would facilitate the annual communication of accomplishments. Once the HR department's annual improvement plan is created, the school board should then consider submitting it to the executive committee or the HR committee at the same time as the periodic progress reports.

3.2 Human Resource Management

The purpose of reviewing the HR management processes is to assess whether:

- Planning and processes are in place for the recruitment of the appropriate number of qualified staff to support the student achievement targets;
- Appropriate processes are in place to promote the personal and professional growth of all staff;
- Adequate systems and procedures are in place to manage employee compensation plans, labour relations, employee performance and attendance and other support services to foster employee satisfaction;
- Opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes can be identified.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for HR management, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full.

Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a “No” indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Staff Recruitment

Leading Practices – Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Recruiting policies and practices are reviewed annually, and are aligned with staff planning in support of student achievement.	Yes
New hire policies and procedures for the respective staff groups are harmonized.	Yes

Labour Relations

Leading Practices – Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
HR Management and the board of trustees have established labour/management committees.	Yes
HR Management has established policies and procedures to minimize grievances.	Yes

Employee Performance Evaluation Processes

Leading Practices – Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
HR Management has policies and procedures for an employee evaluation/performance system for all staff.	No
HR Management maintains and communicates formal disciplinary policies and procedures for all staff.	Yes

Attendance Management Processes/Programs

Leading Practices – Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Attendance management process/programs exist that include employee supportive policies and procedures to minimize the cost of absenteeism.	Yes
Management periodically reports on the effectiveness of the attendance management process/programs to senior management and the board.	No

Management of HR and Payroll Data

Leading Practices – Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Payroll processing is segregated from employee data records, and changes to data are adequately controlled.	Yes
HR records are current, including the formal tracking of teacher qualifications and experience.	Yes
HR Management has implemented an approved pay equity plan, which is reviewed periodically and amended as necessary.	No

Management of the School Board's Benefit Plans

Leading Practices – Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
HR Management periodically conducts independent compliance audits of the school board's insurance carrier to ensure adherence to benefit plan's terms and conditions.	No
Employee data is automatically synchronized among the board and external carriers such as TPP, OMERS and the board's benefit provider(s).	Yes
Policies and procedures ensure the school board's benefit plans are managed appropriately.	Yes

Monitoring Staff Satisfaction

Leading Practices – Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Management has established policies and procedures for staff/professional development and monitors staff take-up, budget, and outcomes.	No
Confidential staff satisfaction surveys are performed periodically.	Yes
Confidential exit interviews are performed for all staff.	No

Staff Recruitment

In its recruiting and employment guidelines, the Board states its wish to eliminate any discrimination based on “race, lineage, country of origin, colour, ethnic origin, civil status, citizenship, faith, sexual orientation, age or disability” in its hiring process. Recruiting guidelines include the obligation to create a selection committee for any permanent position and prohibit any family relationship or conflict of interest between interviewed candidates and the members of the committee. These guidelines specify

the composition of the selection committee, and also state that the HR department must verify diplomas, letters of reference, as well as medical and criminal records.

The employment package, which contains interview guides, evaluation templates and forms to be completed by school board personnel, clearly maps out the different steps of hiring process.

Positions to be filled are identified within the executive committee by the HR manager in collaboration with the Director of Education, the superintendents and the managers of academic departments. The HR manager evaluates personnel requirements and potential staff surpluses three times a year. Hiring requests must be made through requisition forms that are approved by the HR manager.

For permanent positions, the HR department begins by identifying applicants internally according to the applicable collective agreements. If the position remains vacant following an internal search for applicants, the HR department then looks for external resources by publishing job offers on the school board's website and, occasionally, in regional newspapers.

To attract new teaching candidates and increase its supply of substitute teachers, the school board relies mainly on the job fair at the École des sciences de l'éducation of Laurentian University, which is held at the end of January or beginning of February. This fair enables the Board to identify, on average, one hundred applicants. During the fair, potential candidates receive an information package about the Board and are invited to an interview in March. The interviews are conducted by five interview committees, which are each comprised of two school principals. The HR department developed five different interview guides and language tests to assist the committees in the selection process. Once they have passed the interview and the test, selected candidates are invited to add their names to the Board's substitute teacher list. Of all the applicants, only 40% sign up because many fail the written tests.

As a next step, the school board could consider keeping trustees informed of recruitment trends and challenges by means of a periodic report submitted by the HR manager to the board of trustees.

Labour Relations

In 2008, the Board negotiated four collective agreements with its employee groups: general education teachers and substitutes of elementary and secondary schools (general and substitute AEFO), maintenance workers and custodians (CUPE), and support staff (OSSTF). The collective agreements are managed by the HR manager. Since the beginning of 2009, the manager has continued implementing the new collective agreements, which namely include new allocation processes and training for school principals on the new measures taken at management councils.

The HR manager maintains good relationships with the unions as she is in contact with union officers on a weekly and even day-to-day basis.

The school board also has joint committees. During joint committee meetings, which occur at least four times a year, members monitor compliancy with collective agreements and discuss potential issues or disputes.

Given the frequent contact between the HR manager and union officers as well as joint committee meetings, fewer disputes have escalated to arbitration. In the last three years, only two of the 24 disputes were resolved through arbitration.

Employee Performance Evaluation Processes

The school board has developed performance appraisal procedures for teaching staff, principals and vice-principals, short- and long-term substitute teachers, the Director of Education, new teachers, senior management and unionized support staff. These processes are supported by official guidelines that are published on the school board's website. The HR manager is responsible for monitoring compliance with these guidelines.

The performance appraisal of teaching staff conforms to the current requirements of the Ministry of Education. As directed by the Ministry, the school board evaluates its experienced teachers on a five-year cycle. New teachers are reviewed during their first and second years as part of the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP). Long-term substitute teachers are evaluated twice in the first year. The Board also evaluates short-term substitute teachers at least once every three years.

Unionized support staff, such as custodians, para-professionals, and school secretaries, is evaluated according to guidelines on performance appraisals for unionized support staff every five years. The Board has no formal guidelines to evaluate non-unionized support staff, such as full-time HR employees and the administrative assistants of the superintendents and Director of Education. In practice, these employees are evaluated every five years. The HR manager is currently writing out the guidelines for this practice.

At the beginning of the year, to assist supervisors in the evaluation process, the HR department sends school principals and supervisors a list of employees they need to evaluate over the course of the year. The list allows senior management to plan evaluations for the upcoming year. The HR support clerk follows up on the appraisals to be done during the year. The performance appraisal forms for each position are available to supervisors on the school board's network. During certain management councils, school principals are presented anonymous examples of evaluation reports to increase their awareness of the best evaluation practices.

The school board has guidelines on disciplinary measures in which the Board adopted a progressive disciplinary policy, although it recognizes that the gravity of a situation may require other disciplinary measures or sanctions. The Board's progressive disciplinary process first consists of a verbal notice, followed by a written notice detailing the expected changes in behaviour before disciplinary measures are taken. If the demands in the notice are not met, the HR department places a record of the infraction in the employee's file. After a second infraction, the employee may be suspended for a day. After three infractions, the employee may be dismissed. The HR department provides extensive support for supervisors on matters of discipline. Schools send written disciplinary notices to the Board's headquarters for approval. When disciplinary measures result in employee dismissal, the Director of Education submits a report detailing the facts and steps taken to the board of trustees.

Attendance Management Processes/Programs

The school board has implemented several procedures to monitor employee attendance and make employees aware of their responsibilities. For example, after three consecutive days of absence, employees must present a medical certificate to their school principal or supervisor. Employees may be requested to present a medical certificate after a one-day absence. To encourage the attendance of custodial staff, the HR department included a compensation clause in their collective agreement that may compensate them for any sick days they did not take, if the rate of absence is decreased to less than seven days per year for all custodial staff.

The HR manager also implemented a "return to work" plan. For absences longer than two weeks, the HR department assistant contacts the employee's doctor to determine whether any accommodations are to be made. If this is the case, a return to work plan details the various accommodations to be made. The plan is then submitted to the employee's union for approval.

Absenteeism data, based on information sent by schools, is currently collected manually and recorded at the school board's main office. Schools are required to submit a report listing all staff absences to the HR department every two weeks. The HR assistant, who compiles the data at the school board headquarters, prepares a report for the HR manager every two months.

Attendance is monitored bi-weekly by the HR assistant and bi-monthly by the HR manager. The HR manager submits the attendance reports to the Director of Education when the rate of absences significantly exceeds the average; however, attendance is currently not subject to formal and periodic reports submitted to the executive committee or the board of trustees.

The Board is currently implementing Smart Find, a software program that reports staff absences and finds substitutes automatically. Currently, principals and vice-principals

are responsible for contacting substitutes when they need to replace a member of their staff. This process will be automated with Smart Find, since the computer will call the substitutes instead of the principals. The program will also contribute to HR functions by processing refund requests related to training fees or preparing attendance monitoring reports. Smart Find will be operational starting in September 2009.

Management of HR and Payroll Data

As part of a consortium with other French-language school boards, the school board bought a SAP licence, which includes a payroll management module. The Board's payroll is managed in-house. Payroll functions are managed by a payroll clerk who reports to the Superintendent of Business. Official employee records are kept in the school board's main office. Personnel files are maintained by the HR officer. The division of tasks between HR and the payroll department, as well as the use of two separate modules for payroll and the management of personnel records, are two examples of best practices in terms of internal control.

HR management has developed effective processes to ensure that teacher qualifications and experience are formally tracked and updated. Teacher qualifications are updated annually on the website of the Ontario College of Teachers.

The school board has developed a pay equity plan for non-unionized employees in 2004, which was renewed in November 2008. The Board has also developed a pay equity and internal equity plan for unionized support staff. As a next step, the Board should ensure that its pay equity program is kept up-to-date for all employees including unionized support staff.

Management of the School Board's Benefit Plans

The Board provides a variety of benefits to its employees. The school board manages its benefits plan through an insurance company's management services, as part of a consortium with 10 other French-language school boards in Ontario. Neither the school board nor the consortium of French-language school boards employs a third-party consultant to annually review the insurance company or to verify the validity and accuracy of claims processing.

Once a year, the HR department reconciles personnel data from the insurance company with that of the school board.

A pamphlet developed by the insurance company informs employees of the school board of their social benefits. Each new employee receives a hiring kit in which the pamphlet is inserted. Part of the yearly training session for new staff members in August is dedicated to social benefits.

Monitoring Staff Satisfaction

Besides the training sessions organized for principals and vice-principals during management councils, management has not established guidelines or procedures specifically for staff development. The HR manager plans to conduct a survey on training needs for all staff in August 2011.

The HR department carries out formal, general staff surveys to solicit feedback on the priorities of the Board or on general attitudes. The last staff survey was conducted by an external consultant in 2005. Next year, the school board wishes to redo the survey with stakeholders, including staff members, with the assistance of a third party consultant, in order to assess changes in the satisfaction level of the school board's staff.

The school board does not currently conduct exit interviews with departing staff members. In the next six months, the HR manager plans to develop a departure guide.

Recommendations:

- The HR department should complete its employee evaluation guidelines to include a policy on performance appraisals for non-unionized support staff to ensure uniformity and transparency in the evaluation process of school board employees.
- The HR department should develop a formal attendance management program that includes the implementation of policies and procedures to reduce absences, methods for monitoring absences for different employee groups of the school board, and the production of periodic attendance reports to inform the executive committee and trustees of the efficiency of attendance management programs and methods.
- The school board should conduct periodic reviews of the insurance carrier (Administrative Services only) that manages medical and dental claims, in order to ensure that the school board's claims are processed according to the plan's terms and conditions.
- The HR department should establish policies and terms related to support staff development. The department could start by conducting a survey to identify employees' training needs. Once a training plan is established, the HR department should implement measures to monitor employee participation, the training budget and results.
- The HR department should continue its efforts to introduce exit interviews for employees who are leaving their positions.

3.3 School Staffing/Allocation

The purpose of reviewing school staffing/allocation processes is to:

- Assess whether accurate and efficient processes are in place to forecast and plan for staffing needs to support student achievement target strategies;
- Ensure that staff optimization allocation processes are in place, supported by an effective attendance management system;
- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for School Staffing/Allocation, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a “No” indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Planning and Processes for Annual Staffing and Allocation

Leading Practices – School Staffing/Allocation	Evidence of Adoption?
Policies and procedures govern the annual staff allocation process.	No

Monitoring and Reporting on Staff Allocation

Leading Practices – School Staffing/Allocation	Evidence of Adoption?
Systems are in place and accessible by both HR and Finance staff to establish and track an approved level of staff.	Yes
Systems and processes monitor adherence to key Ministry and board policy parameters, such as: class size, prep time, collective agreement requirements and other board directions.	Yes
Management periodically reports on the actual allocation of staff, compared to the original approved allocation plan and budget (FTEs by function, department and program, actual versus budget).	Yes
Procedures are in place to enable adjustment of staff allocations for school based staff, if estimates for enrolment and funding change after budget approval.	Yes
Plans for student support services and staffing are based on a student-needs analysis.	Yes

Benchmarking Costs with Other Boards and Funding

Leading Practices – School Staffing/Allocation	Evidence of Adoption?
Staffing costs are compared with similar school boards and the funding model to ensure efficient use of resources.	No

Planning and Processes for Annual Staffing and Allocation

Staff allocation is determined by the Director of Education, in collaboration with the Superintendent of Business, the superintendents of education, the managers of the academic departments and the HR manager. The enrolment forecasting process is developed on a school-by-school basis, and considers both a top-down (Board level, trend analysis) and a bottom-up (local, school-by-school) approach.

The Board has established neither a policy nor guidelines governing the determination of total needs and staff allocation in schools. In practice, the Board bases its staffing procedures on that of collective agreements.

The Board's in-house computer application compiles staffing forecasts produced by principals for each level and grade in February. During an executive committee meeting held at the end of February, members study staffing needs compared to the December's enrolment forecasts prepared by the Superintendent of Business, which are revised based on the principals' February forecasts after the first registration days in the second semester.

In the beginning of April, the executive committee makes some adjustments to the tentative staff allocation plan, if needed, and approves it. In May, the Superintendent of Business requests a final staffing forecast from school principals and prepares the final staff allocation forecast based on expected funding. The staffing plan is then integrated into the budget forecasts submitted to the board of trustees in June. The staffing plan is reviewed and adjusted in September to reflect the changes that occurred between the schools' initial estimates and the start of the academic year.

The planning process for special education staff is based on a detailed student needs analysis that is conducted jointly by principals, the manager of student services, the superintendent in charge of special education, the Director of Education and the executive committee.

To determine custodial staffing needs, the Superintendent of Business inputs enrolment forecasts received in February into the Excel template for maintenance staff allocation, which has been used by the Board for several years. The template results are reviewed by the maintenance manager and the executive committee to ensure suitable staff allocation for each school.

Monitoring and Reporting on Staff Allocation

The executive committee is responsible for ensuring that school staffing is carried out according to Ministry directives on matters such as class size, preparation time and collective agreement requirements. Members of the executive committee are responsible for monitoring staff allocation. When allocating staff, the Superintendent of Business takes into account the need to ensure that class size in elementary schools does not exceed 20 students, as well as the preparation time requirements set out in the collective agreements. Compliance of staff allocation with various requirements, namely those related to collective agreements, is monitored by the HR manager, who compares actual and planned allocations on a monthly basis.

The Board develops a conservative staffing allocation plan to avoid surplus staff, and periodically follows up on the original allocation plan by monitoring actual staff allocation.

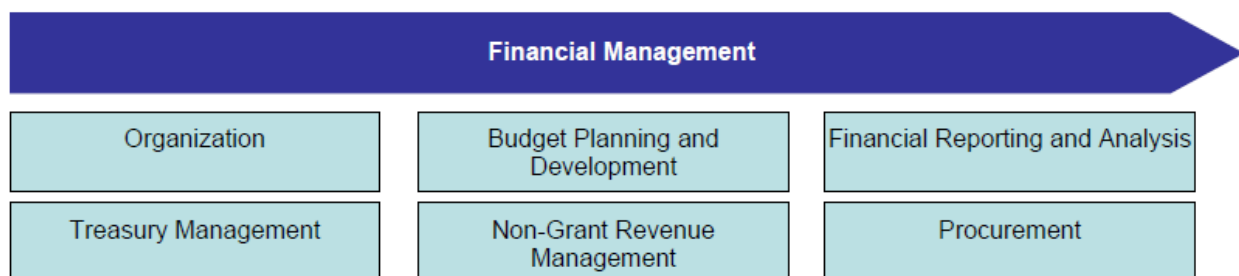
Benchmarking Costs with Other Boards and Funding

Three years ago, the HR manager compared several French-language boards with other boards in the region to identify their ratios of HR staff to school board employees. The Board established it has less staff in the HR department than other boards, which led to hiring an additional person. Besides this comparison, the HR department does not regularly benchmark HR costs with those of other boards.

Recommendations:

- The school board should formally document the annual staff allocation process to clarify the duties and responsibilities of all staff, thereby increasing the transparency of the process for the trustees.
- The HR department should consider comparing its staff allocation costs with those of other school boards with a similar funding model in order to ensure an efficient use of resources.

4. Financial Management – Findings and Recommendations



The financial management of the school board contributes to the efficient and effective use of fiscal resources. Financial management ensures that the annual budget is developed within the Ministry's allocation and is aligned with student achievement targets, and that appropriate financial policies and procedures are in place to manage resources.

The financial and related business processes contribute to an appropriate level of transparency in the allocation and use of the budget by the various departments. They also ensure that the reporting of results to the board of trustees and other school board stakeholders reflects the approved goals/priorities relating to student achievement.

The following is a summary of our assessment of the school board's adoption of the leading practices under the processes identified above. All findings are a result of a review of the data provided by the school board and on-site field work, which included interviews with all key finance management staff, as well as follow-up and confirmation of information.

4.1 Finance Organization

The purpose of reviewing the organization of the finance department is to assess:

- The establishment of policies and procedures to support the key finance functions, activities and required business priorities and their alignment with student achievement targets;
- Financial services branch support of the overall goals/priorities and accountability measures established by the school board;
- The efficiency and effectiveness of the departmental structure and support of the roles and responsibilities for the key functions, activities and practices;

- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for the finance organization, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a “No” indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

Leading Practices – Finance Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
The finance department’s goals and priorities are documented in an annual department plan that is aligned to the annual board improvement plan accessible by key stakeholders. The plan incorporates measurable targets, specific timelines, and identified accountability.	No

Organizational Structure and Accountability

Leading Practices – Finance Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
The finance department has clearly defined organizational units and delineates the respective roles and responsibilities. A current organization chart is available.	Yes
Finance department staff have the appropriate finance/accounting designations and experience.	Yes

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

Leading Practices – Finance Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
Management has processes in place to monitor finance policy compliance.	No
Management provides scheduled finance policy and procedures awareness, training and skills development educational sessions.	Yes

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

The school board’s Superintendent of Business supervises all activities related to finances, computers, facilities, maintenance and school transportation. In this document, the section responsible for budgeting, accounting, supplier and customer accounts and payroll is called the finance department.

The finance department's mandate and objectives are not presented on the school board's website. In practice, its mission is to be at the service of the school board by managing budgets, salaries, purchases and the associated controls.

The finance department does not currently develop an annual plan yet. For all business-related activities, the Superintendent of Business developed an annual improvement plan, called an operational plan, which identifies five priorities for the finance department for the 2008/2009 academic year. For each priority, the annual improvement plan identifies the planned activities or measures, the required resources, deadlines and expected results, such as planned meetings or the successful implementation of software programs. The finance department's priorities for the 2008/2009 academic year are to improve the schools' and the school board's accounting processes by implementing a SEMS software program and to revise the documentation and procedures related to raising school funds.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

The Superintendent of Business reports to the Director of Education and sits on the executive committee to which he reports on financial matters on a weekly basis. The Superintendent of Business is also a member of the business and facilities committee to which he reports four to six times a year.

For financial matters, the Superintendent of Business is supported by a controller, who supervises a finance clerk in charge of supplier accounts, a payroll officer, as well as an accounting clerk in charge of helping the controller in accounting tasks.

The duties and responsibilities of each member of the finance department staff are well-defined. There is a detailed, up-to-date organizational chart of the HR department, but it is not publicly accessible on the school board website.

Every day, the Superintendent of Business, the controller and finance department staff share information on the department's priorities and initiatives. The Superintendent of Business and the controller are chartered accountants; both are certified to perform their duties.

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

The department maintains a set of guidelines that cover various pertinent aspects of financial management such as purchasing, fund raising and expense claims from staff members and trustees. The finance department has processes in place to monitor purchasing guidelines, including periodic or systematic audits depending on the amount. However, the school board lacks measures to ensure certain procedures or administrative directives are followed, such as submitting original documents justifying a

board employee's VISA purchases within a reasonable delay, for example 2 weeks, of receiving the credit card statement.

Finance guidelines are published on the school board's website. The guidelines are not subject to a documented, systematic review cycle; however, a review of the material demonstrates that the department is focused on maintaining and updating them so that they remain applicable. As a next step, the Board should consider establishing a regular review cycle for financial and purchasing guidelines to ensure that they are updated and communicated on a regular basis.

The finance department offers a training session on financial guidelines and procedures to all new employees before the beginning of the school year. During this time, new principals also receive training on purchasing policies, SAP and school banking. Furthermore, training on financial guidelines and procedures is offered to school principals by the controller and Superintendent of Business throughout the year during management councils.

Recommendations:

- Management's annual improvement plan should be completed to include measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities for the finance department. The annual business improvement plan should demonstrate an explicit relationship between the finance department's activities and results and the Board's priorities and targeted results, as defined in the accountability framework. Management should also submit its annual business improvement plan to the executive committee or the business and facilities committee at the same time as the periodic progress reports.
- The finance department should continue its efforts to implement measures to ensure its administrative guidelines and financial directives are followed.

4.2 Budget Planning and Development

The purpose of reviewing budget planning and development processes is to:

- Understand the linkages between the board of trustees' goals and priorities and the operational budgeting process;
- Assess whether sufficient transparency and controls exist in the budget planning and development process;
- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for budget planning and development, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a “No” indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Annual Budget Development Process

Leading Practices – Budget Planning and Development	Evidence of Adoption?
The annual budget development process is transparent, clearly communicated, and incorporates input from all key stakeholders including management (with principals), board of trustees and the community.	Yes
The annual budget presented for approval demonstrates that it is linked to the board-approved goals and priorities including student achievement targets. It provides useful and understandable information for all stakeholders.	No
Budget planning processes account for all required cost and revenue changes.	Yes

Enrolment Forecasting Linked to Budget Development

Leading Practices – Budget Planning and Development	Evidence of Adoption?
Management has adopted an integrated (at school board and school levels) approach to enrolment forecasting. This supports development of the staffing plan and the annual budget.	Yes

Identification of Risks and Mitigation Strategies

Leading Practices – Budget Planning and Development	Evidence of Adoption?
Management identifies all significant risks during budget planning, and develops strategies to mitigate the risk of spending beyond authorized/budgeted levels.	No

Annual Budget Development Process

The development process for the school board’s annual budget is documented in a document entitled “processus budgétaire” (“budget process”), which presents the important dates and stages of the budgeting process for the year. This document is

prepared by the Superintendent of Business in collaboration with the school principals. The process is first reviewed by the executive committee in order to obtain the feedback of the senior administration. Then it is presented to the business and facilities committee, who reviews the document and recommends its approval to the board of trustees. In February, the Superintendent of Business submits the budget process, including a general overview of announced grants, to the trustees for approval.

The school board's budget process begins in December when the Superintendent of Business develops the enrolment forecast based on current enrolment and the expected trends for the next year. By mid-February, school principals are invited to submit their enrolment forecasts to the administration. At the same time, a letter is sent to unions and school councils inviting them to respond to the budget process.

At the end of February, the Superintendent of Business reviews the school principals' forecasts, and makes certain changes to them, if needed. The Superintendent then develops a temporary staffing plan, which is reviewed at every executive committee meeting until April. Once the staff allocation plan is approved by the executive committee, the Superintendent of Business incorporates the staffing data into planned budget expenses in the SAP. Operating expense forecasts are prepared based on budget use for the current year and the evaluation of the budget for the upcoming year. The EFIS form of the Ministry of Education is completed, and the Superintendent of Business and the controller submit an initial report to the executive committee in the beginning of April. After receiving feedback from the executive committee, the Superintendent of Business presents an initial budget forecast to the business and facilities committee in mid-April.

During the board of trustees' meeting in April, the Superintendent presents an overview of the grants announced by the Ministry of Education.

In May, the Superintendent of Business requests a final enrolment forecast from school principals and prepares the final staff allocation based on planned funding. The Superintendent of Business submits a second budget forecast to the business and facilities committee in mid-May. The forecast is then presented to the board of trustees during a closed meeting in May.

The planned budget that was validated by the business and facilities committee is presented to the board of trustees for approval during an open meeting in June. The finance department updates the EFIS and submits the data to the Ministry of Education by June 30.

The budget is revised in November based on actual enrolment and current information. The revised budget is presented to the board of trustees for approval in December.

Enrolment Forecasting Linked to Budget Development

The Superintendent of Business, the Director of Education, the HR manager, the superintendents of education, the department managers and school principals develop the staff allocation jointly. The enrolment forecasting process is developed on a school-by-school basis, and considers both a top-down (Board level, trend analysis) and a bottom-up (local, school-by-school) approach.

Recently, the school board established procedures for the development of enrolment forecasts that define the methodology used by the school board for its annual enrolment forecasting exercise. The procedures also define how and when schools are consulted regarding enrolment forecasts. The schools are surveyed two or three times between February and May.

Ten-year enrolment forecasts are primarily based on trends of the past five years and the schools' regional or local economic situation as observed by the Superintendent of Business and the school principals. For enrolment in Grades 1 to 6, all students are assumed to be transferred to the next year. For instance, the Superintendent of Business prepares a spreadsheet where Grade 2 students in 2008/2009 are transferred in Grades 3 and 4 for 2009/2010 and 2010/2011, respectively. This process is repeated for each grade level and school. Enrolment forecasts for kindergarten are based on the past five years' trends. For enrolment forecasts for Grades 7 students (Grades 7 to 12 secondary schools) and Grade 9 (Grades 9 to 12 secondary schools), the past years' trends regarding the number of students coming from feeder schools are analyzed, and forecasts are made for each school. In general, between 75 and 90% of elementary students continue their studies in one of the Board's secondary schools.

The Board has neither established nor distributed to superintendents, principals and administrators a detailed policy/guideline or a schedule to govern the determination of total needs and staff allocation in schools. In practice, the Board bases its staffing procedures on that of the different unions.

The planning process for special education staff is based on a detailed student needs analysis that is conducted jointly by the schools, the superintendent of special education and the management of academic departments. Other school-based support staff allocations are based on formulas that are reviewed annually, taking into account budget constraints in the final determination.

School board staffing is a standing item on the executive committee's weekly agenda and is therefore reviewed by the members of the executive committee when needed.

Identification of Risks and Mitigation Strategies

According to the Superintendent of Business, the school board mainly faces the risk of actual enrolment levels being lower than forecasted levels. The administration manages this risk by developing conservative staffing estimates, to gain flexibility if there is significant variance between forecasts and actual enrolment data.

Another potential risk the school board faces is actual expenses being higher than those forecasted or authorized in the budget. To reduce this risk, the finance department has implemented various control measures such as blocking a purchase order when budget utilization exceeds 100%.

The finance department noted that risks identified during the budget development process are orally communicated to the members of the executive committee and the business and facilities committee. Budgetary risks are currently not documented.

Recommendations:

- Management should ensure that the annual budget presented for approval is clearly linked to Board-approved goals and priorities, including student achievement targets.
- The school board should consider documenting the risks linked to the budget and formally sharing them with members of the executive and finance committees and trustees who are unable to attend meetings, so that they are also aware of the potential risks, the status of risks and proposed mitigation strategies.

4.3 Financial Reporting and Analysis

The purpose of reviewing Financial Reporting and Analysis processes is to:

- Assess whether procedures are in place to ensure that management, the board of trustees and the Ministry receives timely, accurate and complete financial information of all school board activities;
- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for Financial Reporting and Analysis, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a “No” indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Integrated System for Variance Analysis and Financial Reporting

Leading Practices – Financial Reporting and Analysis	Evidence of Adoption?
The school board's integrated financial information system provides useful, timely and accurate information for management and stakeholders.	Yes

Interim Financial Reporting Accountability

Leading Practices – Financial Reporting and Analysis	Evidence of Adoption?
Interim financial reports provide sufficient detail (including a comparison of actual to budget and to appropriate benchmarks and with appropriate variance explanations) for a clear understanding of the status of the current year's budget and the outlook for the year.	No
Senior management is held accountable for the integrity of financial reporting through formal sign-off and approval procedures.	Yes
Management completes and files all financial reports in accordance with established timelines.	Yes

Audit

Leading Practices – Financial Reporting and Analysis	Evidence of Adoption?
Management maintains an independent internal audit function.	No
Internal audit plans are clearly documented. Internal audit report recommendations are followed up and acted upon by management.	No
The Board has an audit committee with external members as advisors.	No
The external auditor's planning and annual reports are presented to the Board's audit committee, and any recommendations are acted upon by management.	Yes

Integrated System for Variance Analysis and Financial Reporting

The Board uses an integrated financial system to record, track and report financial data. The Board bought a SAP licence as part of a consortium with 10 other French-language school boards.

The system integrates general ledger, accounts payable, accounts receivable, budget, purchasing modules, and HR and payroll modules. The financial system facilitates variance analysis and management reporting. The school board is presently implementing a SAP module to manage its assets.

The finance department's controller prepares the accounts table in the financial system and manages the system's access privileges with the Superintendent of Business. The controller, who is responsible for accounts payable and accounts receivable, payroll and supplier accounts, is also in charge of registering new clients and suppliers in the financial system and entering payroll results in the ledger.

The financial system allows budget holders to print out their own budget tracking reports at any time.

Interim and Annual Financial Reporting

The Superintendent of Business produces quarterly financial reports for the business and facilities committee.

The Board's interim financial reports include budget forecasts submitted to the Ministry in June or revised forecasts, actual data on expenses and revenue for the current year, and a forecast of results for the end of the current year (surplus or deficit) for each budget item. Budget utilization for each item (actual expenditures compared with budget forecasts) is expressed as a percentage. Explanatory notes are provided for the different expenditure and revenue categories, as well as over- and under-budget results.

The format of monthly or quarterly financial reporting varies significantly among school boards. As with other school boards in the province, the Board's interim financial reporting can be enhanced to provide additional information to support informed decision-making. A more informative report would include a comparative percentage for each expenditure/revenue category. This would reflect what the "expected spending to date" should be, relative to either historical averages, prior year's experience or, in the case of salaries and benefits, the number of staff and pays processed to date.

The Director of Education and the Chair of the board of trustees sign the financial statements. However, they do not sign interim financial reports, but they sign the minutes of the meetings of the board of trustees or business and facilities committee at which different financial reports are approved.

Except for the 2007/2008 financial statements, the Superintendent of Business and the controller produce and file all financial reports according to established deadlines.

Audit

The primary function of the internal auditor is to provide added assurance that internal controls established by the school board are operating effectively and in compliance with policies and procedures. The school board currently does not have an internal auditor.

Developing a mandate for an internal audit function would assist the administrative council and the board of trustees in their overall governance and accountability roles. The internal audit function could also help develop performance measures and indicators for programs and services. The function should report to the finance audit committee of the Board. The annual audit plans would be presented and approved by the committee, and all reports would be presented to the committee.

Along with significant changes in accounting in recent years, the complexity of the annual financial statements is increasing. Audit committee members must understand what constitutes sound internal accounting and operational control processes. Consideration should be given to adding external members to the finance committee who can act as advisors. The advisors would not be voting members, since current legislation recognizes only trustees as voting members on Board's standing committees. The professional backgrounds of the external members could include accountants, lawyers or other professionals, depending on the needs of the committee and its mandate. This will ensure that an objective third-party view is applied to the review of financial statements, the auditor's report and in-year reports produced by management. The Board does not currently have an audit committee.

The school board established a business and facilities committee that includes the Superintendent of Business, the Director of Education and seven trustees. The committee's mandate includes the following:

- Reviewing the budgeting process and budgets and recommend their approval
- Reviewing financial statements and recommend their approval
- Reviewing the external auditor's recommendations
- Reviewing the board of trustees' interim financial reports
- Reviewing the board of trustees' renewal and construction projects
- Reviewing changes in refund procedures and recommend their approval to the board of trustees.

The external auditor presents the audit plan to the Superintendent of Business and the controller. Annual reports and the auditor's recommendations are presented to the board of trustees and the business and facilities committee. The Superintendent of Business informally reports to the business and facilities committee and the executive committee on any measures taken with respect to the auditor's recommendations for change.

As a next step, the Board should consider asking the external auditor to present his or her annual audit plan to the board of trustees. The Board could also formalize the feedback process on the actions taken to address the external auditor's recommendations for change through an annual report to the board of trustees.

Recommendations:

- Management should consider modifying the format of interim reports, based on the format suggested in section 4.3 of this report.
- The school board should consider formalizing an internal audit function. This would include a broader audit of financial and management controls. The finance department could start by identifying options for the mandate and scope of this function and the estimated cost for each option.
- The school board should consider establishing an audit committee to oversee the audit process. The committee's mandate could be to review the audited annual financial statements, the annual appointment of an external auditor, the annual audit plan, the recommendation letter and other matters related to the annual audit of the financial statements, the treasurer's quarterly report, and other Board matters.
- Management and the board of trustees should consider including external advisors to contribute to the effectiveness of the audit committee or that of the finance committee if its mandate is widened.

4.4 Treasury Management

The purpose of reviewing treasury management processes is to assess:

- Whether processes are in place to ensure the optimal use of cash, investments and borrowings within school boards;
- Whether sufficient internal controls exist to support cash management, investments and borrowings;
- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for treasury management, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a "No" indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Cash and Investment Management

Leading Practices – Treasury Management	Evidence of Adoption?
There is an efficient cash management process to maximize interest income, using short-term investments where appropriate.	No
Cash management activities consolidated with a single financial institution.	Yes
Management periodically reports to the board on the performance of the investment activity, in accordance with the approved investment policy in accordance with the <i>Education Act</i> .	No
Management periodically compare the school board's banking terms and conditions to those of similar school boards.	Yes
Management monitors financial risk related to cash/investment management, and has a plan to mitigate associated risks. Management performs regular cash/funding forecasting to ensure that the school board's debt service costs can be met to maturity.	Yes

Management of School-Based Funds

Leading Practices – Treasury Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Management ensures adequate controls are in place to safeguard non-school board funds and coordinate the annual reporting of revenues and expenditures from schools and school councils.	Yes

Cash and Investment Management

The Board has consolidated the school board's cash management activities with a single institution that was selected through a tendering process issued as part of a consortium with other French-language school boards located throughout the province in 2008.

The school board does not have an investment policy that refers to the provisions of the *Education Act*.

The Board has two types of accounts: one for regular transactions and individual trust accounts for staff members with special working arrangements (e.g., 4/5 work days). The Board's benefits from an interest rate on the average monthly cash balance that is based on the prime rate decreased by 1.75%.

Cash balances are monitored weekly, and bank reconciliations are performed monthly by the controller. The Board does not have periodic "cash position" reports on the anticipated accounts payable, payroll, cash flow from the Ministry and tax collections. These reports could be used to identify surplus funds for long-, medium- and short-term investments.

The Board maintains reserve funds to attend to unforeseen circumstance. The Director of Education requires the board of trustees' approval to use reserve funds. Over the past few years, the Board did not have to use its reserves. However, for the long term, the board of trustees and the Director of Education should consider establishing a guideline on a healthy reserve level for the Board, and consider developing a plan to replenish the working fund reserve, as required.

Management of School-Based Funds

Schools maintain their own bank accounts. They have the option to use the same banking institution as the school board, but this is not mandated by the central Board office due to the remote locations of certain schools. In practice, the Board limited the number of bank accounts to one account with the exception of schools that hold bingos and raffles.

Banking in elementary and secondary schools is managed through the banking management application (AGB) in the SAP. This banking module allows each school to post all revenues and expenses according to their respective category: educational school trips, school fees, and fundraising events. School principals and secretaries received training on the application when it was introduced in the spring of 2006 and during updates.

Although the school board adopted a guideline on fundraising, it does not follow any specific guidelines on the financial management of school funds that explain general bookkeeping principles, the required controls for bank deposits and withdrawals, and accounting methods for financial transactions. The finance department is developing a manual on the use of school funds, based on the work of the finance committee of the Ontario Association of School Business Officials. The manual describes how to manage school funds and associated administrative procedures with the computer system. The manual should be distributed to the schools by the end of 2009.

In the meantime, through presentations by the finance department during management councils, school principals were made aware of the importance of implementing and following good practices for the management of school funds. Schools were informed that they are required to perform bank reconciliations that are signed and reviewed by principals on a monthly basis and submitted to the Board's head office twice a year. During the year, the controller follows up with the schools about the information they received. External auditors perform audits in three of the Board's schools each year.

Recommendations:

- The Board should develop an investment policy to reduce idle cash, in accordance with the *Education Act*.

- The finance department should develop periodic reports on the Board's cash position and the results of future investment activities, and share them with the board of trustees.

4.5 Non-Grant Revenue Management

The purpose of reviewing non-grant revenue management processes is to:

- Assess whether procedures are in place to ensure the timely, complete and accurate recording of the different types of non-grant revenue;
- Assess whether internal controls exist to support appropriate cash handling and cash management;
- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

Non-grant revenue management is a smaller functional area for the school board. The school board receives Education Programs – Other (EPO) funding from the Ministry for specific initiatives, which requires it to focus on the non-grant revenue line.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for non-grant revenue management, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a “No” indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Policies and Procedures and Planning to Support Non Grant Revenues

Leading Practices – Non-Grant Revenue Management	Evidence of Adoption?
The board has established policies and/or procedures for the application of its fee structures.	Yes

Procedures for all Non-Grant Revenues

Leading Practices – Non-Grant Revenue Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Electronic registration and payment system are used where appropriate (e.g., ConEd, permitting of facilities, leasing, etc.).	No

Leading Practices – Non-Grant Revenue Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Staff monitor all sources of revenue to ensure completeness and compliance with policies. Action plans and processes maximize collections including obtaining credit/risk assessments.	Yes
School board budget identifies revenue and expenditure for each EPO program. Management monitors activity to ensure compliance with terms and conditions.	Yes

Policies and Procedures and Planning to Support Non Grant Revenues

The school board has the following sources of non-grant revenues, which represent an average amount of about \$40,000:

- Community use of schools
- Daycare operations
- Leasing of facilities.

The finance department estimates the amount of non-grant revenue every year using historical data. Then, the data is integrated into the Board's overall budget.

The use of schools by the community is subject to a guideline. Activities such as the leasing of facilities and daycare services in school board facilities are subject to formal agreements that include fee schedules.

The fee schedules for community use of school facilities are posted on the school board's website and divided according to the type of community organization (parent associations, non-profit community organizations serving students, community partners) and the type of premises (classrooms, specialized workshops, auditorium, cafeteria, kitchen, gym). In accordance with the agreement on community use of school facilities between the school board and the Ministry of Education of Ontario, the fee schedules for community use of schools include lower rates for non-profit organizations.

The finance department has a practice of sending reminders to deal with accounts receivable and overdue payments, which is also applicable to non-grant revenue, for example in the case of unpaid rent.

Procedures for all Non-Grant Revenues

The school board currently does not use an electronic registration and payment system for its non-grant revenue.

EPO grants received by the school board are allocated to the appropriate superintendents or project leads. The finance department creates a new project/account code in the SAP for each EPO grant. The project leader closely monitors the account and tracks in-year expenses. The controller has entered the deadlines for submitting reports into a table that allows the school board follow up on EPO grants during the year. The Superintendent of Business submits to the trustees an annual report that presents the different EPO grants given to the school board.

Recommendations:

- The finance department should consider using electronic registration and payment systems for its non-grant revenues exceeding a minimum amount to be determined. For example, management could consider an electronic registration and payment system for its continuing education programs.

4.6 Procurement

The purpose of reviewing procurement processes is to assess:

- Whether procurement policies and practices are in place to ensure that the school board acquires goods and services through an open, fair and transparent process;
- Whether appropriate internal controls exist to support the procurement and related payment process;
- Whether school board processes ensure the receipt of value for money from all acquired goods and services;
- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for procurement, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a “No” indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Procurement Policies and Procedures

Leading Practices – Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Approved procurement policies and practices are clearly communicated to staff with purchasing authority, and are periodically reviewed and updated.	Yes
Vendor selection criteria include elements other than lowest cost, such as total cost of ownership, value, and quality and competitive procurement (including the use of public advertising for RFPs and tenders over a defined level).	Yes
Purchasing managers monitor and ensure compliance with the Board's procurement policies and procedures.	Yes

Participation in Buying Consortia

Leading Practices – Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
The procurement strategy includes the participation in consortia/cooperatives for cost savings.	Yes
Management evaluate and develop strategies to increase purchasing power and minimize the cost of goods and services procured.	Yes

Purchasing Levels of Authority

Leading Practices – Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Purchasing authorization levels are commensurate to job title/role, and are monitored for compliance by a supervisor or department head.	No

Policies and Procedures for PCard/Corporate Card Use

Leading Practices – Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Policies and procedures for the use of PCards and corporate credit cards are documented and communicated to users through regular training and monitoring.	Yes

Accounting for Completeness of Purchase/Payment Cycle

Leading Practices – Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Automated three-way matching (purchase order, receipt/invoice and inspection) is used.	No
Commitment accounting is in place to monitor budget utilization.	Yes
Management has implemented electronic supplier interface for ordering, processing and payment, including the use of supplier portals.	Yes

Use of Electronic Funds Transfer for Greater Efficiency

Leading Practices – Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Management maximizes use of electronic funds transfers (EFT) for payments.	No

Procurement Policies and Procedures

The school board follows a guideline to regulate purchases, invitations to tender and bids. This guideline is available on the school board's website.

As the guideline describes, the department's procurement objective is to provide the entire school system with the best services, equipment and supplies at competitive prices, while protecting the school board's interests. The guideline does not mention any specific priorities related to purchasing strategies, such as buying in bulk and in consortia or favouring Canadian products, services by local Francophone companies, or ecological products with similar prices, quality and efficiency. In practice, the Board participates in many purchasing consortia to benefit from savings that can be made by purchasing large quantities. The school board also ensures that purchasing decisions are made with a focus on the total cost of ownership throughout the life cycle of the product, rather than just the cost of acquisition.

The school board has approved guidelines in accordance with the direction given by the Ministry in the spring of 2007. The following guidelines have been adopted and posted on the Board's website in the spring of 2007:

- Refunds for staff expenses
- Refunds for trustees' expenses
- Advocacy and advertisement.

The guideline on staff expense refunds includes a section on procurement card use. It states that PCard purchases cannot exceed \$1,000. For purchases greater than this amount, a purchase order needs to be completed.

The Board does not offer training sessions to ensure that employees comply with purchasing policies and procedures, but rather, it mainly relies on informal guideline reminders. However, purchasing limits are presented to new principals during training at the beginning of the school year.

Participation in Buying Consortia

The Board participates in numerous purchasing consortia, including for the purchase of natural gas, school transportation services, insurance, paper, classroom and library supplies, snow removal and lawn care services, and caretaking supplies.

The Board used the purchasing consortium of the French-language school boards for the acquisition of a SAP licence and a videoconferencing system, for banking negotiation purposes, and for acquiring labour relations services.

For some purchasing categories, the Board adopted a strategy of signing contracts with certain suppliers, such as those for office supplies and car rentals, in order to minimize the costs of goods and services.

Purchasing Levels of Authority

The guideline regulating purchases, invitations to tender and bids states that all departments must adhere to the following limits for securing supplier quotations:

- For purchases of \$0 to \$5,000, the purchase is left to the solicitor's discretion.
- At least three verbal price offers are required to purchase or lease goods and services when the estimated total cost is between \$5,001 and \$20,000. Any purchase exceeding \$5,000 must be approved beforehand by the direct supervisor.
- At least three written quotations are required for any purchase or lease of goods and services when the total estimated cost is between \$20,000 and \$75,000.
- An invitation to tender is required for any purchase or lease of goods and services of a total estimated cost exceeding \$75,000.

The various steps for the tendering process and the responsibilities of the school board and its employees are described in the guideline on purchases, invitations to tender and bids.

For purchases of more than \$5,000, the school board recently developed a form entitled “résultat de soumission” (“bid result”) to keep a record of the three verbal quotations signed by the Superintendent of Business. The method for systematically implementing this process is being developed.

The finance department’s controller ensures procurement guidelines are followed for purchases under \$5,000. The controller systematically reviews all purchases greater than \$1,000 and below \$5,000. She occasionally verifies purchases below \$1,000. The Superintendent of Business ensures procurement guidelines are followed for purchases greater than \$5,000 by ensuring that price quotation requests and invitations to tender conform to the guideline.

The purchasing guideline does not define precise levels of authority for procurement. In practice, purchases below \$2,500 that are made through a purchase order require one level of approval, whereas purchases above \$2,500 require two levels of approval. The school board should consider reviewing the purchasing guideline to include precise approval levels according to the solicitor’s position and field of activity.

Policies and Procedures for PCard/Corporate Card Use

The school board distributes two kinds of cards: procurement cards, which have limits per transaction and purchase restrictions; and credit cards, which have monthly limits only.

The school board’s guideline on refunding employees includes a section on procurement card utilization. The guideline is current as of May 2007 and was reviewed in 2009.

The school board has approximately 60 cards, which were distributed among school principals and secretaries, and academic services staff. The eight members of the executive committee use credit cards.

According to the guideline, procurement card use is restricted to payments for expenses related to the cardholder’s functions. It cannot be used for purchasing personal or nonauthorized goods and services. For school secretaries, administrative assistants and academic services staff, authorized purchases are primarily limited to supplies. School principals may purchase goods and services related to transportation and supplies. Secondary school principals and the information technology services coordinator have two cards: a standard procurement card and a travel card. The travel card is used for travelling expenses for teachers, educators or students during extracurricular activities such as sports tournaments. Members of the executive committee have a standard credit card, which does not have any restrictions in terms of types of purchases.

With the exception of the superintendents, the Director of Education, the HR manager and the Superintendent of Business, who have a limit of \$10,000 per month, most procurement card holders in the school board have a \$5,000 purchasing limit per month. The purchasing limit for each transaction, which differs depending on the cardholder's level of responsibility or position, varies between \$500 and \$2,500 per transaction according to the cardholder's function. For example, school principals have a \$1,500 limit per transaction.

Credit card and procurement card requests need to be approved by the cardholder's direct supervisor and the finance department's controller. The statements are sent to the Board's office. Then, they are sent to the purchasing card holder, who is responsible for reconciling, attaching receipts and getting approval from his or her respective supervisor before the 25th of each month.

The school board ensures the guideline on procurement cards is followed by sending this guideline with each new card issued and performing internal verifications. The finance department developed procurement card utilization procedures that describe the steps to follow after a purchase or in case of theft. These procedures also include the school board's guideline for making purchases with the procurement cards. All procurement card holders must sign the procedures document to confirm to the school board that they are aware of the guidelines and will abide by their terms. All VISA statements are verified on a monthly basis by the finance department clerk, who checks that the same supplier does not appear more than once a day on the cardholder's statement. These verifications help identify and correct potential discrepancies with the guideline.

Accounting for Completeness of Purchase/Payment Cycle

The Board predominantly relies on the procurement module of its financial system to process its purchase-to-payment cycle.

Currently, the majority of purchases higher than \$1,000 are completed using the financial system's purchase order. For 50% of these purchases, the school board uses three-way matching between purchase orders, receipts and invoices. The remaining 50% are subject to two-way matching between purchase orders and invoices.

For purchases below \$1,000 for which no purchase order is provided, the person responsible for the budget must ensure that the merchandise was received before approving the invoice.

The Board has a commitment accounting process in place to monitor budget utilization. Once a purchase order has been entered into the financial system, the system automatically encumbers those funds against the budget, and the general ledger is updated.

The Board has not implemented an electronic supplier's interface for ordering, processing and payment, including the use of supplier portals.

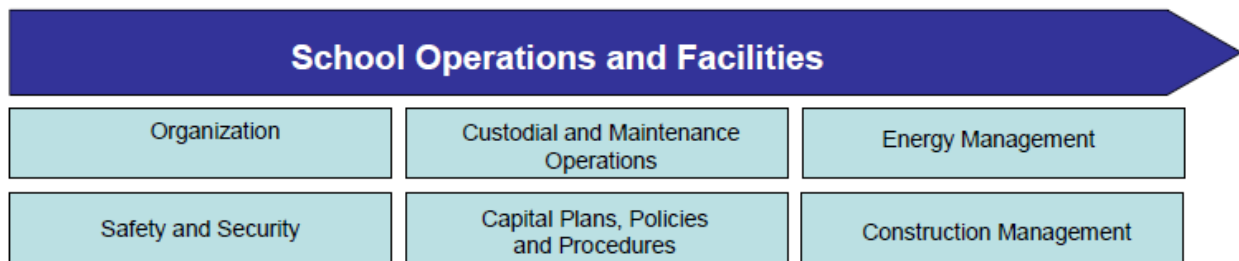
Use of Electronic Funds Transfer for Greater Efficiency

The school board currently uses automatic withdrawals for energy bills, equipment rentals and certain payroll suppliers (TPP, OTIP), which represents approximately 2% of the school board's payments. The remaining payments are currently made using cheques. The school board plans to use electronic funds transfers (EFTs) to cover 80 to 90% of its payments by the end of 2009, once the SAP team will have configured the system to create EFT files for school board suppliers.

Recommendations:

- The finance department should define purchasing levels of authority that are commensurate with job title/role in its purchasing policy. Once the purchasing levels of authority are established, the department should ensure that they are communicated to staff and develop a monitoring process for this policy.
- The finance department should ensure that three-way matching (purchase order, receipt/invoice and inspection) is used for Board's purchases, when appropriate.
- The finance department should continue to increase its use of electronic funds transfer (EFT) payments to all appropriate suppliers, to gain greater efficiency and minimize the risk of payments being altered prior to clearing the bank.

5. School Operations and Facilities Management – Findings and Recommendations



Efficient and effective management of the school board's facilities (particularly schools) is an important factor in student achievement. Along with providing a positive learning environment for students, this function sets and meets standards of cleanliness and maintenance, examines opportunities to increase energy efficiency, and addresses the health, safety, and security requirements of the school board. Management uses cost efficient and effective processes in the design and construction of new facilities.

The following is a summary of the assessment of the school board's adoption of leading practices under the processes identified above. All findings are a result of the review of data provided by the school board and on-site field work, which included interviews with all key school operations and facilities management staff, as well as follow-up and confirmation of information.

5.1 Operations and Facilities Organization

The purpose of reviewing the organization of operations and facilities is to assess:

- Whether the board of trustees and management have established policies and procedures that support the key departmental functions and activities, strong internal controls and financial management;
- Whether the department supports the overall goals, priorities, and accountability established by the school board in support of student achievement targets and strategies;
- The efficiency and effectiveness of the departmental structure and whether roles and responsibilities support the key functions/activities and the required business practices;
- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for the operations and facilities organization, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a “No” indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

Leading Practices – Operations and Facilities Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
The operations and facilities department’s goals and priorities are documented in an annual department plan that is aligned to the annual board improvement plan and is accessible by key stakeholders. The plan incorporates measurable targets, specific timelines, and identified accountability.	No

Organizational Structure and Accountability

Leading Practices – Operations and Facilities Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
The operations and facilities department has clearly defined organizational units and delineates respective roles and responsibilities. A current organization chart is available.	Yes
Senior operations and facilities staff have appropriate designations (e.g. P.Eng.) and relevant field experience.	Yes

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

Leading Practices – Operations and Facilities Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
Management has processes in place to monitor departmental policy compliance.	No
Processes exist to monitor new legislation and regulations and implement necessary changes.	Yes
Management provides scheduled policy and procedure awareness, and training to address ongoing skill development and emerging regulatory issues.	Yes

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

The Board's Superintendent of Business supervises activities related to the facilities and maintenance departments.

The facilities and maintenance departments' mandate and objectives are not presented on the school board's website.

The facilities and maintenance departments do not develop an annual improvement plan. For all business-related activities, the Superintendent of Business has developed an annual improvement plan, called an operational plan, which identifies five priorities for the business department for the 2008/2009 academic year. For each priority, the annual improvement plan identifies the planned activities or measures for the year, required resources, deadlines and expected results, such as meetings or successful implementation of a software program.

The facilities department's priority for the 2008/2009 academic year is to improve building efficiency by revising the Board's renewal and accessibility plans.

As for the maintenance department, which supervises all aspects of health and safety, the priority for the 2008/2009 academic year is to review the schools' emergency plan by modifying the emergency situation component and by offering schools training on the new emergency and fire prevention plans.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

The Superintendent of Business is supported by a facilities department officer, who is in charge of construction and energy saving projects, and by a maintenance manager, who indirectly supervises custodians and is responsible for school health and safety files. The facilities department officer and the maintenance manager are supported by a facilities department secretary and a skilled worker, who is trained in cabinet-making and helps in the Board's repair and construction projects.

The roles and responsibilities for all positions are clearly outlined in their respective job descriptions, and are well understood by the organization. There is an up-to-date, detailed organizational chart of the business department including the maintenance and facilities departments, but it is not publicly accessible on the school board's website.

Every day, the superintendent, the facilities department officer, the maintenance manager and maintenance and facilities department staff informally share information about school board priorities and initiatives regarding facilities and maintenance.

Key maintenance and facilities staff have appropriate professional designations and/or related field experience, and are involved in various provincial committees to keep abreast with best practices and new directives.

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

The maintenance and facilities departments maintain several guidelines on various aspects of operations and facilities management on the Board's website.

The maintenance and facilities departments do not currently have processes in place to monitor guideline compliance. In practice, the departments rely on informal contacts with principals, different managers and the Board's staff to ensure guideline compliance.

The guidelines are not subjected to a documented, systematic review cycle; however, a review of the material demonstrates that the management of the maintenance and facilities departments are focused on maintaining and updating them so they remain applicable. As a next step, the Board should consider establishing a regular review cycle of guidelines related to operations and facilities organization to ensure they are updated and communicated on a regular basis.

Appropriate training sessions on regulatory requirements are offered to custodial and capital staff members. Training sessions deal with different subjects such as the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) or acts and regulations, such as those related first aid. Training sessions also allow the Board to comply with the following periodic initiatives: water flushing, lead testing in water systems, ergonomics, work inspections, training new employees, elevated work, slips and falls, equipment maintenance, physical risks and all other regulations related to occupational health and safety legislation.

Recommendations:

- Management's annual business improvement plan should be completed to include measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities for the maintenance and facilities departments. The annual business improvement plan should demonstrate an explicit relationship between the planned activities and goals for the maintenance and facilities departments and the Board's priorities and targeted goals, as defined in the accountability framework. The school board should also submit its annual business improvement plan to the executive committee or the business and facilities committee at the same time as the periodic progress reports.
- Management should set up measures to ensure school operation and facilities management guidelines are followed. These processes should include periodic communication of the guidelines to the appropriate staff, as well as occasional assessments of staff compliance with the guidelines.

5.2 Custodial and Maintenance Operations

The purpose of reviewing all processes relating to custodial and maintenance operations is to assess:

- Whether custodial and maintenance services are responding effectively and efficiently to maintaining an optimized learning environment for students;
- Whether the department has the appropriate organizational structure to effectively manage service delivery;
- Whether appropriate internal controls exist to effectively manage custodial and maintenance operations and expenditures;
- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for custodial and maintenance operations, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a “No” indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

The Board’s Staffing Model Supports the Board’s Cleaning Standards and Maintenance Requirements.

Leading Practices – Custodial and Maintenance Operations	Evidence of Adoption?
The board has adopted cleaning standards and has developed a standard set of processes and tools to monitor, manage, and report on results.	Yes
Management’s custodial/maintenance allocation model optimizes use of staff.	Yes

Development of Annual/Multi-Year Maintenance Plan

Leading Practices – Custodial and Maintenance Operations	Evidence of Adoption?
Using stakeholder input, management develops an annual and multi-year (three to five years) maintenance plan that addresses preventative and deferred maintenance priorities. Outcomes improve the learning environment for students. The plan optimizes the use of available funding (Annual Renewal Grant and Good Places to Learn funding) and is approved by the board.	Yes

Training to Support Skills Development and Safety

Leading Practices – Custodial and Maintenance Operations	Evidence of Adoption?
A monitored annual training plan for staff to address ongoing skill development and emerging regulatory issues.	Yes

Standardization of Cleaning and Maintenance Supplies

Leading Practices – Custodial and Maintenance Operations	Evidence of Adoption?
An inventory system tracks and controls major cleaning and maintenance equipment.	No
Common standards ensure efficient procurement of supplies to minimize costs and promote energy and operating efficiency.	Yes

Project Management, Monitoring and Support Systems

Leading Practices – Custodial and Maintenance Operations	Evidence of Adoption?
A work-order system and process that records, monitors, and evaluates projects ensuring the effective use of resources.	Yes
Management regularly evaluates the overall effectiveness and efficiency of its maintenance and custodial service practices.	No

The Board's Staffing Model Supports the Board's Cleaning Standards and Maintenance Requirements

The Board adopted a custodial staffing model that optimizes the use of resources. The custodial staffing model is based on several parameters, such as enrolment figures, the presence of a daycare in the school, the number of floors and surface area of the buildings, and the level of education (elementary or secondary).

The Board hires approximately 40 custodians who report to their respective school principals. The custodians receive a binder containing a description of their duties, a plan of the building they are responsible for, and written cleaning standards that are used by school principals to appraise custodial staff and by the maintenance manager to handle potential complaints from facility users or custodians. A description of their duties during summer vacation is also presented. In order to maximize the use of the school board's custodial resources throughout the year, a staff rotation system was implemented for employees with specific abilities, such as wood floor treatment.

The results of compliance reviews are not subject to formal written reports to the maintenance manager or the Superintendent of Business. In general, school principals informally report any incident to the maintenance manager or the Superintendent of Business on a case-by-case basis, if needed. However, a performance appraisal of custodial staff is prepared every year. As a next step, the school board could have school principals formally present the results of their assessments of compliance with cleaning standards in a periodic report or form to management.

Development of Annual/Multi-Year Maintenance Plan

The facilities officer and the maintenance manager develop an annual maintenance plan that addresses preventive, urgent and non-urgent maintenance activities in compliance with school board standards. The school board's maintenance and renewal activities are re-assessed annually as part of the evaluation of each school during school visits by the facilities officer and the maintenance manager and the revision of maintenance plans submitted annually by school principals. Priorities are then incorporated into the annual plan. This helps ensure that schools are maintained in the best condition possible to support improved student learning and facilitate employee productivity.

Training to Support Skills Development and Safety

The Board has established a training program to provide ongoing skills development to maintenance and facilities staff, and to address emerging regulatory issues. Training needs are identified by a joint committee with representatives from the union and school board, including the maintenance manager who acts as the co-chair of the joint committee.

The maintenance manager has scheduled annual professional development, health and safety days for the Board's tradesperson and custodians. Training sessions deal with different subjects such as the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) and protocols in the event of a work accident. Training sessions also deal with topics such as equipment maintenance and care, locking mechanisms, work ergonomics, physical dangers and manipulating equipment.

As part of the orientation process, each new custodial staff member receives training and a guide on the school board's ergonomic program, which includes information on work injury prevention practices. The guide's illustrations and photographs present the postures to avoid while working as well as warm-up exercises to do before starting any cleaning activity. The Board invites all new employees to sign an agreement form stating that they will follow the practices described in the school board's ergonomic program guide.

Standardization of Cleaning and Maintenance Supplies

The school board participates in a purchasing consortium with another school board in the Sudbury region for cleaning and maintenance products. This consortium has a contract with only one supplier.

The Superintendent of Business calculates a budget for cleaning and maintenance supplies for each school based on its surface area and history of supply use. The schools' budgets for cleaning and maintenance supplies are managed by the maintenance manager who receives and processes custodial supply requests. School principals send a standard request form by fax to school board headquarters.

Centralizing the process for ordering custodial supplies contributes to the standardization and the efficient use of the Board's cleaning and maintenance supplies.

The school board does not have a centralized inventory of cleaning and maintenance equipment by school. The maintenance manager is planning to develop a central inventory of custodial equipment in the future.

Project Management, Monitoring and Supporting Systems

The maintenance department does not have an electronic work order recording system. The school board considered that the costs for maintaining such a system and training staff would greatly exceed any potential benefits of its implementation within the school board.

Work or activity requests, which are prepared by school principals and sent to the Board, are presently written on paper forms that can be downloaded from the school board's intranet site. Each work request is reviewed by the maintenance manager and filed according to its priority level. It is then assigned to the school board's tradesperson or to external contractors depending on the urgency of the repair, health and safety factors, and the availability of the required tradespeople. Approved work orders given to contractors are also assigned a purchase order in the school board's financial systems (SAP) by the facilities department's secretary.

An Excel file is used to record, monitor and evaluate the costs of substantial maintenance projects. Currently, the school board does not compare the actual labour, time or costs of smaller projects, e.g. those valued at less than \$2,000, with the forecasted figures. As a next step, the maintenance department could expand its monitoring of project costs and the efficient use of resources for every work order to ensure a consistent monitoring process.

Assessment of the Board's Service Delivery Model

Custodial services are provided by school board employees. The school board uses a skilled worker and external contractors depending on the maintenance service required.

The school board does not regularly compare the general efficiency and effectiveness of its maintenance and custodial services with those of other school boards.

Recommendations:

- The maintenance department should proceed with its plan to implement an inventory system that will enable it to track and control major cleaning and maintenance equipment.
- The school board should also regularly compare the organization of its maintenance and custodial activities with that of similar or contiguous school boards.

5.3 Energy Management

The purpose of reviewing all related energy management processes is to assess:

- Whether adequate planning and communication exist to support the reduction of energy consumption;
- Whether school board structure and processes are in place to ensure that energy is procured for the lowest cost;
- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for energy management, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a “No” indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Energy Management Plan

Leading Practices – Energy Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Management has established a multi-year energy management plan that incorporates measures to be implemented and the tools to monitor and manage the plan.	Yes

Leading Practices – Energy Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Purchasing practices support energy conservation objectives (e.g. Energy Star products, leveraging consortia membership).	Yes
Successful conservation initiatives are shared across all schools and with other school boards.	Yes

Tracking and Reporting Energy Conservation

Leading Practices – Energy Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Management provides formal annual reporting on the conservation savings achieved against the plan.	No
A comprehensive system exists to budget expenditures, track consumption and identify opportunities for further savings.	Yes
Billing for all board facilities is consolidated from each utility.	No
Centralized technology that automates energy regulation and conservation (e.g., light control, desktop power) is used wherever practical.	Yes

Energy Management Plan

The Board uses a an energy management strategy that focuses on replacing aging and energy-consuming building components, such as boilers, windows and lights, and on purchasing new systems (high efficiency heaters or computerized controls) that can yield the most significant energy savings. Infrastructure and equipment replacement projects are prioritized according to the return on investment and expected cost savings.

In 2008, the school board hired an external consultant to conduct an energy audit for all its facilities. The consultant's summary report was presented to the board of trustees in December 2008. The summary contained an annual forecast of the reduction of electricity and natural gas consumption and greenhouse gas emissions (CO₂) for each building if measures are taken to increase the energy efficiency of facilities. On the basis of the consultant's recommendations to reduce energy consumption for each facility as well as the Ministry of Education's funding for energy-efficient schools, the Board has developed a two-year action plan that details various projects to install, replace or repair devices intended to reduce energy consumption. The energy management plan was presented to the board of trustees in May 2009.

As a next step, the school board should implement tools to monitor and manage the energy management plan to ensure that projects are followed through and achieve the measurable results described in the board-approved plan. As a next step, the school board should also present a formal annual report to the trustees on the conservation savings achieved against the multi-year energy management plan.

The school board participates in a purchasing consortium for natural gas. The facilities department officer attends energy management meetings Comité d'Immobilisations et d'Entretien (CIEP) of the Association des Gestionnaires Francophones (AGF).

The Board's purchasing guideline does not currently require that new equipment be energy efficient (e.g., Energy Star products). In practice, the Board still considers energy efficiency when purchasing supplies. Energy efficiency is also considered a selection criterion when evaluating construction project bids, since bidders are instructed to offer ecological or energy efficient solutions. As a next step, the Board should review its guideline to ensure that energy efficient goods and services are purchased system-wide, either directly or through subcontractors.

Tracking and Reporting Energy Conservation

The energy management portfolio is administered by the facilities officer, who acts as the Board's energy conservation advocate by proposing and implementing various energy conservation initiatives.

The school board developed an internal Excel tool that monitors and records the schools' energy consumption data every month. The data provide a comparative analysis of electricity and gas consumption in all the schools (in kW and cubic metres) and the associated costs. The data are not currently presented in periodic reports on energy conservation intended for the executive committee or board of trustees. The Energy consumption data for each school are also not shared with school principals. These data have not been recently shared with other school boards in order to exchange best practices. As a next step, the Board should communicate effective conservation initiatives and the Board's progress in energy management to schools and other school boards on a regular basis.

Utility billing is not consolidated for all school board facilities; however, natural gas and electricity bills are paid automatically through electronic funds transfers (EFTs).

Centralized technology that automates energy regulation and conservation (e.g., light control, desktop power) is used in eight out of the school board's 11 facilities.

Recommendation:

- The Board should ask the utility companies to provide consolidated billing in an electronic format. This would support more efficient monitoring and forecasting of energy consumption by eliminating the need to manually consolidate billing. Given the geographic area covered by the school board, the Board will likely not be able to consolidate utility billing across all sites. However, management is encouraged to explore opportunities to consolidate utility billing in urban centres such as Sudbury, to increase energy efficiency.

5.4 Health, Safety and Security

The purpose of reviewing all the Health, Safety and Security processes is to assess:

- Whether adequate planning and communication exist to support the provision of a safe teaching and learning environment;
- Whether school board structure and processes are in place to implement safety precautions;
- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for health, safety and security, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a “No” indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Development, Monitoring, and Tracking of Policies and Plans for Health, Safety and Security

Leading Practices – Health, Safety and Security	Evidence of Adoption?
The maintenance of health, safety and security policies and the development of appropriate plans ensure compliance with statutory health, safety and security requirements.	Yes
The security code policy includes alert codes that reflect the situation and threat level, and identify departmental responsibilities.	No
Security incidents are tracked by type of incident (e.g. property damage, intrusion, etc.).	Yes
Operations management follow Ministry guidelines, policy and legislation on healthy schools.	Yes
Safe school teams responsible for school safety (e.g. PPM 144) are implemented in every school.	Yes
Water and air quality standards are monitored and issues are reported for corrective action.	Yes

Development, Monitoring, and Tracking of Policies and Plans for Health, Safety and Security

The health and safety portfolio is led by the maintenance manager who also acts as the health and safety officer.

The school board set up a joint occupational health and safety committee comprised of unionized and non-unionized employee representatives and managers, including the health and safety officer who acts as the committee's co-president. The committee convenes four times a year to discuss actionable measures, to analyze accident causes, to discuss future training sessions and to respond to questions from employees.

Occupational health and safety guidelines are not subject to a documented and systematic review cycle; however, however, a review of the material demonstrates that the health and safety committee is focused on maintaining and updating them so that they remain in effect. The guidelines are reviewed annually.

The school board has not set up a formal workgroup in charge of accessibility. In practice, the Superintendent of Business, the facilities department officer and the maintenance manager collect the schools' requests and organize accommodations to increase accessibility in schools. A table that is revised annually identifies the presence of slopes and ramps, man-lifts, elevators, stage accesses and automatic swing doors with pushbuttons for each facility. This table is used to monitor accessibility levels in schools and determine measures to be taken to increase accessibility.

The school board follows school closing and health and safety guidelines during emergency situations as well as an emergency measures guide. The emergency guide covers mainly fire procedures. The health and safety officer and a superintendent of education are currently developing alert and containment codes, called code red and code blue, which correspond to the incident and the level of danger and identify each department's responsibilities. The emergency measures guide covers bomb threats, emergency procedures and telephone numbers, police service protocols and evacuation drill records.

The Board has a reporting protocol for safety incidents. The HR manager and the health and safety officer developed an information kit with instructions, information and forms to be completed by employees, their supervisors and doctor in case of a work accident.

The school board also monitors acts of vandalism and has set up cameras in seven of its eleven buildings, which resulted in a decrease of vandalism. The school board developed a guideline on video surveillance cameras that identifies the board's objectives in this regard and that recognizes that the school board must protect the

privacy of individuals in compliance with the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

The school board follows two policies with respect to nutrition and physical activity in classrooms⁴, which are accessible on its website. The school board ensures good health for all students by prohibiting the sale of soft drinks in schools and reviewing the cafeteria menu so that it includes more fruits and vegetables. In association with a community health centre in Sudbury, the Board developed administrative guidelines for subcontractors operating cafeterias, based on the Canadian food guide. The Board's fundraising guideline also limits the number of times a school can raise funds by selling products such as chocolate or hotdogs.

In compliance with Sabrina's Law, which was enacted in 2005, the Board developed a guideline on anaphylaxis and administering medicine. A certain number of employees in each school also receive first aid training.

In compliance with the Ministry of Education's Policy/Program Memorandum No. 144, the school board developed a bullying prevention and intervention program, called "Le respect, ça s'apprend" ("Respect is something you learn"), in all of the Board's schools. Safety and character development teams were introduced in every school to implement the program, based on the research conducted by a teaching consultant specializing in behaviour.

A trained custodian takes water samples from the only well located on Board grounds. The samples are taken according to a planned schedule prescribed by the Ministry of Environment's Regulation 170. The samples are analyzed at an external laboratory, and non-standard results are communicated to the Ministries of Education and of the Environment. According to Regulation 243/07, all schools are required to undergo an annual lead test, which is conducted by the maintenance manager and sent to a laboratory.

Recommendation:

- The school board should continue its efforts to introduce different alarm codes corresponding to emergency situations and danger levels along with a description of the responsibilities of each department in its safety guidelines and procedures.

⁴ B-019 *Activité physique quotidienne* (Daily physical activity) and B-017 *Milieu scolaire favorable à la saine nutrition et au conditionnement physique* (Healthy eating and physical fitness in the school environment)

5.5 Capital Plans, Policies and Procedures

The purpose of reviewing capital plans, policies and procedures is to:

- Assess whether school capital assets are being utilized effectively and efficiently;
- Assess how well management is planning for future capital requirements, based on enrolment forecasts and the capacity/maintenance issues of the existing asset base, relative to the funding available from the Ministry (i.e. NPP funding);
- Assess whether management is appropriately prioritizing the maintenance and renewal expenditures in light of the available Ministry funding and multi-year capital programs;
- Identify appropriate controls and transparency within the current planning process;
- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for capital plans, policies and procedures, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a “No” indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Development of Annual and Multi-Year Capital Plans

Leading Practices – Capital Plans, Policies and Procedures	Evidence of Adoption?
The school board has an approved annual and multi-year capital program that includes the related funding plan.	Yes
The school board has an approved pupil accommodation review policy.	Yes

On-going Monitoring and Maintenance of Data to Support Capital Planning

Leading Practices – Capital Plans, Policies and Procedures	Evidence of Adoption?
The school board maintains accurate and up-to-date inventories of school capacity and utilization.	Yes

Leading Practices – Capital Plans, Policies and Procedures	Evidence of Adoption?
Capital forecasts and related funding plans are assessed annually and adjusted to meet current needs and changes to original assumptions such as enrolment projections and capital grants.	Yes
The accuracy of capital forecasts and related funding plans is assessed annually to reflect current needs and changes to original assumptions, such as enrolment projections.	Yes
An accurate and up-to-date assessment of facility conditions is maintained, based on industry standards (using RECAP methodology).	Yes

Development of Annual and Multi-Year Capital Plans

The school board developed its 10-year capital plan using the Student Facilities Inventory System (SFIS), and submitted it to the Ministry. This plan includes the Board's capital requirements over the next 10 years, as well as facility renewal needs. In compliance with Ministry requirements, the Board has completed its capital liquidity template, which was approved by the Ministry in December 2008.

Every two or three years, the facilities department prepares a 10-year renewal plan for schools containing cost estimations, which are presented to the board of trustees for validation. School renewal projects are based on a multi-year analysis of data from the ReCAPP database, experience within the cluster of schools and comments from the maintenance manager, custodians and school principals. The 10-year plan is reviewed annually based on observed needs. The Board actively coordinates renewal projects with the capital plan (i.e., prohibitive to repair schools, Good Places to Learn funding and primary class size) to capture economies of scale in the process.

The Board has an approved pupil accommodation review policy.

On-going Monitoring and Maintenance of Data to Support Capital Planning

The monitoring and planning of school capacity is reported within the framework of the SFIS, even though the school board indicated that the SFIS does not allow tracking of junior kindergarten and kindergarten enrolment. The school board maintains accurate and up-to-date inventories of school capacity and utilization. SFIS financial data is reviewed when there are significant changes, such as the addition of a class.

The facilities department's staff currently use ReCAPP as a tracking tool for projects funded by the Renewal Grant and Good Places to Learn funding.

The accuracy of capital forecasts and related funding plans is assessed annually to reflect current needs and changes to original assumptions of projected enrolment against actual enrolment.

Recommendations:

There are no recommendations for this section.

5.6 Construction Management

The purpose of reviewing all related construction management processes is to assess and identify:

- Whether processes are in place to ensure that school boards complete construction projects on-time, on-budget and with due regard to economy;
- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for construction management, and also identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a “No” indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Cost Effective Practices in the Design and Construction of Facilities

Leading Practices – Construction Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Management uses cost-effective designs, standard footprints, energy conservation and economical construction practices to minimize construction, maintenance and operation costs.	Yes
Management maintains standard policy and procedures to rationalize construction projects, including benchmarking against other school board construction costs and design standards (including coterminous boards).	Yes

Monitoring and Reporting on Progress of Construction Projects

Leading Practices – Construction Management	Evidence of Adoption?
An effective management process monitors and controls construction projects and their costs. This includes periodic project status updates and post-construction project evaluation.	Yes

Maintaining Current Approved Professional Service Providers

Leading Practices – Construction Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Management evaluates and updates the approved list of contractors, architects and related professionals periodically, ideally in five-year cycles.	No

Cost Effective Practices in the Design and Construction of Facilities

The school board has not established policies that specify construction standards such as a standard surface area or preference for certain materials. In practice, the school board has based its standards on parameters and templates that ensure the control of costs and maximize safety (for instance, by using a central corridor) and energy conservation (for instance, by reducing lost space in rectangular forms).

The school board's architect uses a cost evaluator who analyzes different construction options and costs in the region, thereby keeping the school board up-to-date with regional trends. The facilities department officer compares costs per square foot with those of other school boards, as part of meetings with the Comité d'Immobilisations et d'Entretien (CIEP) of the Association des gestionnaires francophones (AGF).

Monitoring and Reporting on Progress of Construction Projects

Construction projects are tracked regularly in terms of their budget, quality and schedule. To manage construction sites and projects in progress, the school board relies mainly on the architect, who is responsible for attending all building site meetings and informing the Board of any potential changes or delays. Several times a year, the facilities department officer goes to the sites for most substantial projects to evaluate the work progress.

The facilities department officer receives and verifies invoices related to construction projects and awaits the Superintendent of Business' approval for payment. The business department then pays the approved bill. Invoices are verified against price offers and are validated only once the architect or the facilities department officer visits the construction site.

For its construction projects, the Board uses standard Canadian Construction Documentation (CCDC) contract forms which specify the procedures to be followed by the Board, the architect and the contractor in case of any changes. The facilities department officer monitors changes using an Excel spreadsheet and writes reports based on SAP data.

The Superintendent of Business presents updates to the trustees on capital projects via the business and facilities committee four to six times a year, and via monthly board

meetings. The board of trustees is updated on construction projects through the business and facilities committee, which includes several trustees.

Maintaining Current Approved Professional Service Providers

With the exception of the supplier list in its financial system's procurement module, the school board does not have a formal, approved list of professional service providers due to its vast territory and the small number of professionals who can work in French. The school board retains professional services following a specific invitation to tender for each project.

Recommendation:

- The school board should consider establishing an approved list of professional service providers subject to periodic review where appropriate (e.g., professional services for the Sudbury region).

Appendices

Appendix A: Overview of the Operational Review

Operational Review Objectives

In order to perform an effective and consistent operational review, the Ministry has worked with independent consultants to develop a Sector Guide that defines consistent standards and leading practices against which the operational reviews and analysis will be based.

Recognizing the unique characteristics of each DSB, the specific purpose of the Operational Reviews is to:

- Strengthen management capacity in school boards by developing recommendations that support improvement in non-academic operations;
- Highlight existing successful business practices used by school boards, to the sector and to school board communities;
- Leverage “Best Practices” across the education sector;
- Provide support and assistance to ensure that school boards are financially healthy, well managed, and positioned to direct optimum levels of resources to support student achievement;
- Provide the Ministry with important input on DSB capacity/capabilities for consideration in the ongoing development of policy and funding mechanisms.

Operational Review Summary Scope

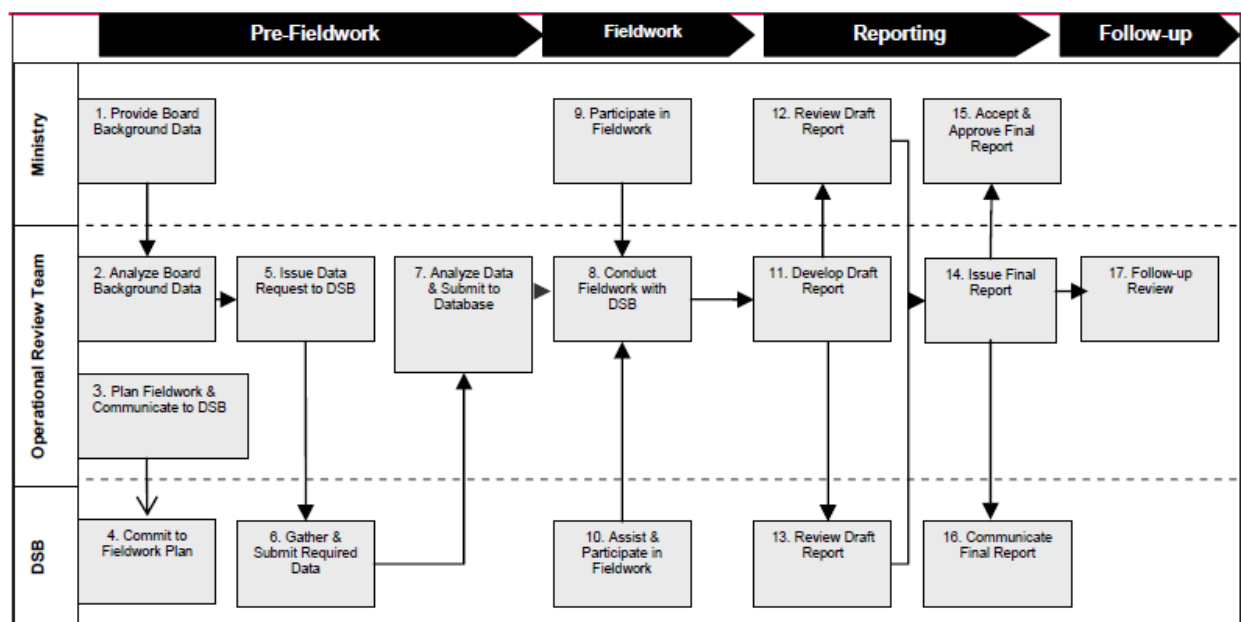
The scope of the Operational Review consists of the following functional areas which have been divided into key processes as shown below. The processes represent the end-to-end lifecycle of activities performed by school boards under each functional area. Each of the processes was examined based on its activities and its adoption of sector agreed leading practices, including alignment and support of student achievement strategies.



Operational Review Summary Approach

The high level Operational Review approach is shown below. The timing for the end-to-end process will vary depending on school board size and complexity.

Observations and assessments are made by the Operational Review Team based on a set of agreed upon leading practices designed for each functional area. The onsite reviews allow the team to validate ministry and board data; provide a better understanding of the environmental conditions and allow the team to review materials that support the existence leading practices.



The Table below defines the key phases and activities which comprise the Operational review Methodology.

Phase: Pre-Field Work

Key Activity	Description
Provide School Board Background Data	The Ministry collects and maintains significant quantities of board data. The Operational Review team has developed a standardized data request from the Ministry to provide background data for each board.
Analyze School Board Background Data	Before the start of the fieldwork, the Operational Review team reviews board background data to understand the financial and operating characteristics. This review identifies specific issues and focus areas.
Plan Fieldwork and Communicate to Board	The Ministry and the Operational Review team develop a review schedule that is communicated to school boards before the start of the next review cycle.
Commit to Fieldwork Plan	Boards are required to commit to the Operational Review schedule. The Ministry and the review team will attempt to accommodate scheduling conflicts.
Issue Documentation Request to School Board	Before the start of fieldwork, a request for supporting documentation is generated to gather operating and other information for each focus area. The review team uses this information to enhance its understanding of the board before the start of field work.
Gather and Submit Required Documentation	Upon receipt of the request for supporting documentation, each school board compiles the requested data. School boards have at least three weeks to complete this process prior to the start of the fieldwork.

Key Activity	Description
Analyze Data and Submit to Database	The review team analyzes the data provided by each school board and adds the results to a sector-wide database to compare the results for each school board.

Phase: Field Work

Key Activity	Description
Conduct Fieldwork with School Board	The fieldwork is conducted for each school board according to the previously agreed upon review cycle. The time required for fieldwork ranges between five and 10 days, based on the size of the school board.
Participate in Fieldwork	Ministry staff support the review team in the performance of fieldwork, to ensure continuity and knowledge transfer of school board operations.
Assist and Participate in Fieldwork	School board staff participate in the fieldwork. The number of participants involved will vary depending on the size of the board.

Phase: Reporting

Key Activity	Description
Develop Draft Report	Based on the results of the fieldwork and data analysis, the operational review team writes a draft report. The draft report contains a synopsis of findings and, where
Review Draft Report (Ministry)	The Ministry reviews the draft report and provides feedback to the review team.
Review Draft Report (School Board)	The review team meets with board senior staff to review and obtain feedback.
Prepare Final Report	The review team incorporates the feedback from the both the Ministry and the board and prepares a final report.
Accept and Approve Final Report	The final report is issued to the Ministry for approval and release.
Communicate Final Report	The Ministry issues a final report to the board.

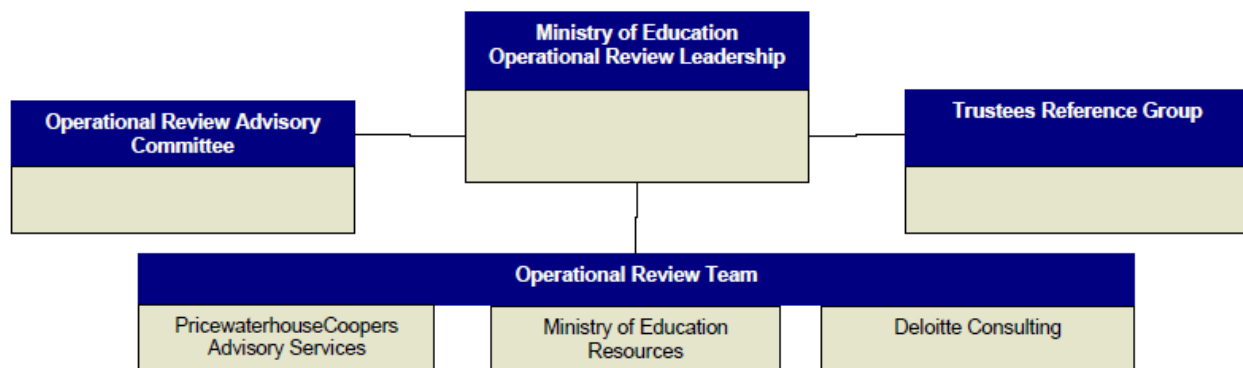
Phase: Follow up

Key Activity	Description
Follow-up Review	Eight to 12 months after the release of the final report, the review team conducts a follow-up review to determine the extent the school board's adoption and implementation of the recommendations.

The Operational Review Team

The Ministry has assembled an Operational Review Team to ensure that these reviews are conducted in an objective manner. The Operational Review Team is designed to leverage the expertise of industry professionals and consulting firms to review specific aspects of each school board.

Management consultants from PricewaterhouseCoopers and Deloitte were hired to complete the Operational Reviews. The Ministry assigned an internal consultant with school board experience to provide the Review Team with valuable insight into school board operations in Ontario. The team has also received guidance and feedback from an Advisory Committee and a Trustee Reference Group convened by the Ministry of Education.



Limitations of this Review

The purpose of this Report is to document the results of the Operational Review of the Conseil scolaire de district du Grand Nord de l'Ontario. The review has been conducted using the methodology as previously described. The review is not of the nature or scope that constitutes an audit made in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards.

Appendix B: Summary of Recommendations

Governance and School Board Administration

No.	Recommendations:
1.	The school board should clearly define and document the division of duties and responsibilities between the trustees and the Director of Education in order to foster effective working relationships.
2.	In the Board's annual improvement plan, management should define specific, measurable, timely, achievable and relevant objectives for both academic and non-academic services that demonstrate alignment with the school board's multi-year strategic plan. Management should consider submitting periodic progress reports with respect to the Board's annual improvement plan to the board of trustees.
3.	The school board should implement a periodic review cycle for guidelines to ensure they remain effective.

Human Resources Management and School Staffing/Allocation

No.	Recommendations:
4.	The HR department's annual plan should be completed to include department priorities and measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities. This plan would inform senior administration of activity details and would facilitate the annual communication of accomplishments. Once the HR department's annual improvement plan is created, the school board should then consider submitting it to the executive committee or the HR committee at the same time as the periodic progress reports.
5.	The HR department should complete its employee evaluation guidelines to include a policy on performance appraisals for non-unionized support staff to ensure uniformity and transparency in the evaluation process of school board employees.
6.	The HR department should develop a formal attendance management program that includes the implementation of policies and procedures to reduce absences, methods for monitoring the rate of absences in different employee groups of the school board, and the production of periodic attendance reports to inform the executive committee and trustees of the efficiency of attendance management programs and methods.
7.	The school board should conduct periodic reviews of the insurance carrier (Administrative Services only) that manages medical and dental claims, in order to ensure that the school board's claims are processed according to the plan's terms and conditions.
8.	The HR department should establish policies and terms related to support staff development. The department could start by conducting a survey to identify employees' training needs. Once a training plan is established, the HR department should implement measures to monitor employee participation, the training budget and results.
9.	The HR department should continue its efforts to introduce exit interviews for employees who are leaving their positions.

No.	Recommendations:
10.	The school board should formally document the annual staff allocation process to clarify the duties and responsibilities of all staff, thereby increasing the transparency of the process for the trustees.
11.	The HR department should consider comparing its staff allocation costs with those of other school boards with a similar funding model in order to ensure an efficient use of resources.

Financial Management

No.	Recommendations:
12.	Management's annual improvement plan should be completed to include measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities for the finance department. The annual business improvement plan should demonstrate an explicit relationship between the finance department's activities and results and the Board's priorities and targeted results, as defined in the accountability framework. Management should also submit its annual business improvement plan to the executive committee or the business and facilities committee at the same time as the periodic progress reports.
13.	The finance department should continue its efforts to implement measures to ensure its administrative guidelines and financial directives are followed.
14.	Management should ensure that the annual budget presented for approval is clearly linked to Board-approved goals and priorities, including student achievement targets.
15.	The school board should consider documenting the risks linked to the budget and formally sharing them with members of the executive and finance committees and trustees who are unable to attend meetings, so that they are also aware of the potential risks, the status of risks and proposed mitigation strategies.
16.	Management should consider modifying the format of interim reports, based on the format suggested in section 4.3 of this report.
17.	The school board should consider formalizing an internal audit function. This would include a broader audit of financial and management controls. The finance department could start by identifying options for the mandate and scope of this function and the estimated cost for each option.
18.	The school board should consider establishing an audit committee to oversee the audit process. The committee's mandate could be to review the audited annual financial statements, the annual appointment of an external auditor, the annual audit plan, the recommendation letter and other matters related to the annual audit of the financial statements, the treasurer's quarterly report, and other Board matters.
19.	Management and the board of trustees should consider including external advisors to contribute to the effectiveness of the audit committee or that of the finance committee if its mandate is widened.
20.	The Board should develop an investment policy to reduce idle cash, in accordance with the <i>Education Act</i> .

No.	Recommendations:
21.	The finance department should develop periodic reports on the Board's cash position and the results of future investment activities, and share them with the board of trustees.
22.	The finance department should consider using electronic registration and payment systems for its non-grant revenues exceeding a minimum amount to be determined. For example, management could consider an electronic registration and payment system for its continuing education programs.
23.	The finance department should define purchasing levels of authority that are commensurate with job title/role in its purchasing policy. Once the purchasing levels of authority are established, the department should ensure that they are communicated to staff and develop a monitoring process for this policy.
24.	The finance department should ensure that three-way matching (purchase order, receipt/invoice and inspection) is used for Board purchases, where appropriate.
25.	The finance department should continue to increase its use of electronic funds transfer (EFT) payments to all appropriate suppliers, to gain greater efficiency and minimize the risk of payments being altered prior to clearing the bank.

School Operations and Facilities Management

No.	Recommendations:
26.	Management's annual business improvement plan should be completed to include measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities for the maintenance and facilities departments. The annual business improvement plan should demonstrate an explicit relationship between the planned activities and goals for the maintenance and facilities departments and the Board's priorities and targeted goals, as defined in the accountability framework. The school board should also submit its annual business improvement plan to the executive committee or the business and facilities committee at the same time as the periodic progress reports.
27.	Management should set up measures to ensure school operation and facilities management guidelines are followed. These processes should include periodic communication of the guidelines to the appropriate staff, as well as occasional assessments of staff compliance with the guidelines.
28.	The maintenance department should proceed with its plan to implement an inventory system that will enable it to track and control major cleaning and maintenance equipment.
29.	The school board should also regularly compare the organization of its maintenance and custodial activities with that of similar or contiguous school boards.
30.	The Board should ask the utility companies to provide consolidated billing in an electronic format. This would support more efficient monitoring and forecasting of energy consumption by eliminating the need to manually consolidate billing. Given the geographic area covered by the school board, the Board will likely not be able to consolidate utility billing across all sites. However, management is encouraged to explore opportunities to consolidate utility billing in urban centres such as Sudbury, to increase energy efficiency.

No.	Recommendations:
31.	The school board should consider establishing an approved list of professional service providers subject to periodic review where appropriate (e.g., professional services for the Sudbury region).